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# The • Devout • Year.

BY

Rev. RICHARD F. CLARKE, S.J.

## Short Meditations for

|  |           |                                 |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Advent</i> :                          | - - -     | Meditations for Advent.         |
|  |           | The Great Truths.               |
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| <i>November</i> :                        | - - - -   | Requiescant in Pace.            |

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# **Meditations for Advent**



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### 1.—What Advent is.

1. Advent is the season when we are taught to look forward both to the first coming of Our Lord into the world at Christmas-time, and also to His second coming at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. His first coming was to seek and to save that which was lost. His second coming will be to gather His elect into the celestial paradise, and to trample all His enemies under His feet. Shall I on that day be regarded by Him as a friend or as an enemy? Is my present life one of devotion to Him and union with Him, or one of selfishness, pride, impatience of the yoke of Christ?

2. Of all the miracles in the world never was there one to be compared to His coming on earth in the form of a man. It was a miracle so entirely above and beyond our reason that unless we knew it by faith to be a fact we should be inclined to pronounce it impossible. That the infinite God should take the form of a creature! that the Eternal Word should be clad in a body formed of the dust of the earth! that He should of His own accord leave the highest heaven for a life of suffering and a death of agony! Nothing but the power of God could work such a wonder as this.

3. Yet we know that it is a fact. "For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven." He yearned after us with a divine love. Willingly, joyfully, almost eagerly He stripped Himself of all His glory. "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." Who after this can refuse to believe that He loved us and still loves us fondly, tenderly? Who can refuse to love Him in return, and to show this love by a loyal obedience to all that He asks of us?



## 2.—The Divine Decree.

1. What brought Christ down from heaven? It was man's sin. From all eternity the Blessed Trinity, looking forward to the fall of man, had decreed that the Eternal Word should clothe Himself with human flesh, and should be born into the world in order to repair the evil that man had wrought. Thus God in His mercy provides a remedy for all the sins and follies of men even before they are committed. We do the harm, and God undoes it. Has He not often thus averted from me the consequences due to my evil deeds?

2. In what garb was the Son of God to clothe Himself when He became Man? In one that should give us some idea of the evil He came to undo. He, the Eternal Son, coequal with the Father, took the form of a servant, was born of a despised race, of humble parents, in poverty, and humility, and contempt. All this should impress on us how sin has deserved all these and every other evil imaginable besides. If these were the results of sin on the spotless Lamb of God, what must they be on sinful, feeble man?

3. The divine decree did not stop at this first coming of the Son of God. There is to be a second advent, one in which He will appear in human form indeed, yet now no longer in lowliness and humiliation, but clothed with all the brightness and glory which His divine nature can impart to His sacred humanity. In this second coming He is to come and receive the reward that He has earned for His human nature, and for all those who had faithfully served Him. He is to come and reign. He is to crush all His enemies under His feet. Look forward to that glorious day, and pray that you may share the glory of the Son of God.

### 3.—The Announcement of His Coming.

1. For a short time after their creation our first parents lived in perfect peace and happiness in the Garden of Eden. If they had continued obedient to the authority of their Creator during their whole time of probation there would have been no need for the advent of the Son of God as their Redeemer from sin, for sin there would have been none. It was their deliberate rebellion that was the occasion that determined the visit of the Word to this world of ours. No wonder that the Church sings, *O felix culpa!* O happy transgression, which earned a Redeemer such as this! Admire God's wonderful providence in thus bringing good out of evil and advantage to man for his very sin.

2. The promise made was couched in words that gave no immediate prospect of the crushing of the serpent's head and the destruction of his power. It left the curse of sin upon the earth and its inhabitants, and announced the sorrows that would accompany them through their time of sojourn here. That law still holds. Christ came to abolish sin, but not its temporal consequences. He who sins shall suffer, is a law which Christ fulfilled and in no way destroyed.

3. Yet the promise of a Redeemer rekindled the light of hope in the souls of Adam and Eve. They and all their children were ever looking and praying for His coming. God's intention was to keep them in expectancy. So too with His second coming. There has always been a tradition of expectation. "Blessed is the man whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." Hence learn to watch and pray. Come quickly, O Lord Jesus!

#### 4.—The Long Darkness.

1. The light extinguished at the Fall was rekindled in the hearts of our first parents when the promise was given them of a Redeemer Who should undo the fatal mischief that had been done. But in their children Adam and Eve had to lament the fatal effects of that deadly evil that they had introduced into the world. As generation followed generation, thicker and thicker grew the darkness, farther and farther did men wander away from the light, that gave to each the power of guiding his feet aright from earth to heaven. Thus it is that each ill deed goes on bearing its deadly fruit, often long after the doer is dead and gone.

2. Yet every man had light and grace sufficient, and more than sufficient, to enable him to walk in the ways of God, and to find his way to the kingdom of heaven. But none save a very few availed themselves of it. "They loved darkness more than light." The world gradually lost all regard for virtue or for God. How grateful should I be to God that I live in happier days!

3. If I had lived then, what should I have been? Even with all my countless graces and advantages, what a poor specimen I am of one made by God, for God, and in the image of God! In heathen days should I not have been among the most depraved? Should I not have recklessly indulged my own inclinations, irrespective of the voice of God warning and reproaching me? What chance should I have had of saving my soul in those days of dark corruption and depravity?

## 5.—Transient Gleams.

1. From time to time there broke through the thick darkness of heathendom a gleam of light that seemed to be a harbinger of the coming day. Some sage or poet sang of a golden age that soon would be at hand. But the flash of light soon disappeared, and only left the darkness even darker than before. So in the life of those who have hardened themselves against God there are sometimes moments when the devil seems to have forsaken his prey, and there seems a hope of better things. But if Jesus' coming is still far away, the improvement soon passes, and the evil seems to have even a more complete mastery than ever before.

2. There is something very beautiful in the sentiments of the old Greek and Roman poets. Their minstrelsy rings sweetly in our ears. Their poems proclaim them men of the highest genius. But they have no power to effect a change of heart, such as is wrought by the inspired words of some great saint or servant of God. God must speak through man's voice, if it is to avail to turn others to God. Do I pray God thus to rule and direct my words that they may do His work?

3. So, too, many of the deeds of the heroes of antiquity appear worthy of the holy ones of God. Some may have been done from a supernatural motive, and may even have merited eternal life. But no act, however noble in the natural order, is of any value in the sight of God, unless it be done with some sort of conscious desire to please and serve Him. Do my ordinary actions possess this necessary characteristic?

## 6.—The Golden Thread.

1. All through the long ages that elapsed from the promise to the coming of the Redeemer, a golden thread of light from heaven ran athwart their darkness. In the chosen people of Israel there ever prevailed a strong conviction of the coming of a Saviour, Who was to deliver His people from all sin and evil. It was handed down from generation to generation, and was again and again renewed by the inspired declarations of the prophets of Israel. Thus God in His mercy never leaves Himself without a witness to reveal to men of good-will the message of hope.

2. So through all the centuries that have passed since the coming of Our Lord, the Catholic Church has been the golden thread of light amid the darkness of heresy and heathendom. What a bright and glorious thread! What a contrast to all around! How it has, through God's mercy, enlightened my life! How can I ever thank God sufficiently that, led by its divine light, I am travelling on in peace and safety to the heavenly Jerusalem!

3. So too there runs through the life of all those who are to attain at last to the eternal happiness of heaven a golden thread which never wholly disappears, even though their steps may wander far from the right path. Sometimes it is kindness to the poor; sometimes devotion to the holy souls; very often it is a reverence to the holy Mother of God that thus runs through the whole of life. In my life God has interwoven some such thread. Do I follow it up with grateful perseverance?



## 7.—The Causes of Delay.

1. If the wickedness of the world in heathen times was so great, how was it that the coming of the Redeemer was so long delayed? To this question we can only give one answer with absolute certainty, that it was so decreed by Almighty God in His infinite wisdom. We cannot hope in this life to comprehend the mysteries of the providence of the Most High. We can only humbly bow our heads and say that the Redeemer came when God so willed, and that what God wills is necessarily the best.

2. Yet we can at least form some kind of conjecture as to the causes of delay. God works by natural means. In order that the religion of Jesus should spread all over the world by the ordinary working of the laws that govern the affairs of men, it was convenient that the world should be subject to one central power. This was never the case until, at the time of Christ's nativity, the Roman Empire was mistress of the world. Thus God prepares the way for His designs of mercy, and arranges the world's events according to His will, yet without forcing the wills of men.

3. There was another reason for the long delay. It was to teach us that God does nothing hurriedly. He always waits before putting into execution His decrees. In this He wishes us to imitate Him. The eternal wisdom of the Most High needs no time for deliberation. His works are not gradually perfected, or improved on second thoughts. But ours are, and the slow action of the providence of God should impress upon us the importance of waiting before we act, and considering and reconsidering all our plans.

## 8.—The Approaching Day.

1. When the sun is soon to appear above the horizon, the morning star, shining with a light derived indeed from him, but nevertheless shining bright and clear even before his coming, gives the signal of his approach. So the holy Mother of God, dawning upon the world with a grace and beauty which was the gift of her divine Son, anticipated His Incarnation and made the world more beautiful in God's sight than it had ever been before. Mary was more precious to God than all the rest of men, and this quite independently of her divine maternity. Consider why this was, and learn a lesson for yourself.

2. The morning star is still clearly seen when all other stars have been extinguished by the light of the coming day. Mary has a brilliancy so great that the brightness of all the other saints fades into nothing in comparison with hers. If this was the case even in comparison with the glory of St. John Baptist, St. Joseph, Abraham the Patriarch, the friend of God, Job, the model of patience, Daniel, the beloved of God, what must her glory be! Thank God for having created one child of Adam worthy of Himself.

3. Mary's consummate beauty is the consequence of there being in her nothing of her own. All was God's; no admixture of self in her motives, in her aims, in her joys and sorrows, her love and hatred. Her affections were simply a reflection of what God loved and hated; like God she loved all things except sin, and those who were the declared and eternal enemies of God. She desired nothing for herself except that she might see God's holy will fulfilled in all. Is this the account that you can give of yourself? Only if this is so are you a worthy child of Mary.

## 9.—The Fulfilment of the Decree.

1. The promised coming of the Redeemer had indeed been long delayed. Patriarch had succeeded patriarch, and died without having the privilege of seeing that long-expected day. The long line of the prophets had passed away, but their desire after the Messiah had not been satisfied. God always keeps His servants waiting for His best gifts, and therefore it was but fitting that they should wait for thousands of years before receiving this Gift of gifts, this Gift in which He gave them Himself.

2. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had also been waiting for one whose immaculate purity should make her fit, as far as any child of Adam could be fit, to be His Mother. There had been many holy women among the daughters of Abraham, but none without sin, and therefore none in whose womb the Son of God could find repose. If Christ thus could not come to dwell with one who was stained with sin, what must be the purity He requires now of those whose Guest He becomes in Holy Communion? O Jesus, forgive me all my careless receptions of Thee, my want of careful preparation, my faults innumerable!

3. Christ Himself had prepared a resting-place for Himself in Mary's sacred breast. As we read in Holy Scripture: "The Most High has sanctified a tabernacle for Himself." So now, if I am to be fit to receive Him, He must prepare my heart. Do I think of this during my preparation for Communion, and pray Him to cleanse me from every stain in His most precious blood, to beautify with many graces the tabernacle where He is to abide?



## 10.—The Forerunner of the King.

1. St. John Baptist was the chosen messenger to proclaim the coming of the King of kings. No other herald had so important an office. He had to prepare the hearts of men for the coming of the Messias. It was this that constituted him the greatest of those who were born of women. If to proclaim the coming of Christ in the flesh was so solemn and responsible an office, what must be the dignity and responsibility of the priests of God, who are sent to announce His second coming in glory?

2. How did St. John prepare for his work? By a life of seclusion and penance. From childhood he lived alone in the desert, his bed the hard ground, his meat locusts and wild honey, his dress a camel's skin. Our Lord contrasts him with those who wear soft raiment. No one who lives a life of luxury will ever be an efficient messenger of God. A priest above all must avoid a life of ease and self-indulgence, if he wishes to win souls for Christ.

3. The secret of St. John's success was thus the result of practising what he preached. He practised much more than he preached, for he enjoined upon his hearers the simple performance of ordinary duties while he led a life of continual penance and self-denial. If our words are to carry any weight we must not preach without practising. The parent or superior who has the training of the young will never train them up to virtue unless he himself is a man of virtue. No one can reach the hearts of others unless he first carries out the lessons he teaches others. Do I do this?

## 11.—The Forerunner's Message.

1. The refrain of St. John's teaching was a very simple and constant one: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It seems strange advice. The coming of the King of heaven might be a reason for joy on the part of those who looked for Him, and of dread on the part of His enemies. But why for doing penance? Yet the teaching of St. John is true now, as it was at the time his words were first spoken. Penance is the means of preparation for the advent of our King. This explains the saint's love of penance. What penance do I practise with this object?

2. Yet after all it is the natural and most suitable means of preparation. It helps us to bring into subjection that lower nature, which rebels against the sovereignty of our King. It detaches us from finding our satisfaction in earthly things. It is in itself an act of obedience to our King. It renders us humble, and teaches us to put our necks under the yoke. It saves us from being separated from the kingdom we are to share by the long prison of purgatory. Learn from all this to love penance.

3. Penance is a necessary preparation for receiving our King when He comes to us in humble form in Holy Communion. This is why confession is the preliminary of that sacred feast, and why contrition is necessary. We must purge our souls by prayer and penance and sorrow for sins, if we are to rejoice exceedingly in the Bridegroom's presence, and to hear His voice sweetly whispering in our ears. Do I prepare thus for Holy Communion?

## 12.—The Forerunner's Office.

1. St. John was something more than a herald. He had to prepare the way for the King, to make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places smooth. His office was that which is intrusted to us all in our own sphere: to try and make the way in which the followers of Christ have to tread straight and easy. What a privilege if we can by our charity and our edifying life make the path of life more easy for those whose lot it is to tread the way of the cross and to walk over rough or stormy paths! Is this your endeavor in your daily life, or do you place obstacles in the path of others by your bad example, want of charity and consideration, impatience, etc.?

2. St. John, as the herald or forerunner of Christ, had to proclaim the coming of the King. He himself expresses this by his description of himself as the *voice* of One Who cries in the desert; that is, Christ spoke through his mouth. So He speaks through the mouths of all His servants just in proportion to their devotion and singleness of purpose. How poor an echo are my words of the whispers of Christ to the faithful soul! How mixed with the discordant notes of self-will and worldliness!

3. St. John's estimate of himself in comparison with Him Whom he announced was that he was not worthy to stoop down and untie the latchet of His sandal. This was the duty of the lowest slaves. It meant that he was unworthy to serve Christ, even in the capacity of a slave, and by doing the work that many slaves would consider beneath them. Am I willing to undertake the humblest and most menial duties in the service of Christ? Do I consider it a privilege to do so?

### 13.—Hope.

1. Advent is essentially a time of hope. It is not in itself a time of joy except so far as hope of joy to come brings with it a present gladness. It is an exact representation of our life on earth. We are in a place of exile and a valley of tears, but yet our hope amid all the darkness should be lighted up and rendered joyous by the prospect of future joy. The motto of our life is our Lord's farewell words to his disciples: "You indeed shall have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." This must be my consolation in all sorrow. I must try and forget my present troubles in the happy thought of joy to come.

2. Why have we so little hope? Generally because we seek to have our happiness here, and so forfeit the right to it hereafter, or at least forfeit the right to look forward to it with confidence and joy. We cannot eat our cake and keep it. If I seek my satisfaction in money, or comforts, or praise, or applause, or affection of others, I have my reward here and cannot expect to get any reward hereafter. I have no crown of justice to hope for if already I have had the crown of satisfied ambition, or pockets filled with money, or a tickled palate, or the buzzing applause of a crowd.

3. Our hope is also marred by our self-will, which prevents our will from being in complete conformity with the will of God. We are conscious of a sort of barrier between ourselves and Him which sadly interferes with our hope. We have assumed a sort of independence of God which renders it impossible for Him to pour into our hearts that hope which is in exact proportion to our conformity to His will. If I were humble and more resigned in all things, I should be more full of hope.

## 14.—Rejoice.

1. The time of preparation is a mingled period of penance and of joy. Of penance, by reason of our sins, which have removed us so far away from God ; of joy, at the prospect of being brought near to Him once more through Jesus Christ. On mid-Advent, as on mid-Lent Sunday, it is the joyful side of the matter that comes before us. More than this, joy is insisted upon as a duty. It seems strange that the command to rejoice should be necessary. Do not all men love joy and seek after it unbidden? One thing it shows, that God desires that we should be full of joy. Thank Him for this merciful intention, and try and carry it out.

2. Yet it is not all kinds of joy that are recommended to us. There are many kinds of joy that the Apostle would be far from recommending. To rejoice in the world is but a sorry kind of joy, on account of its transitory character. *Gaudete in Domino*, says the Apostle—" Rejoice in the Lord." This is the only joy that lasts, and the only joy that is really worth the having.

3. What does St. Paul mean by rejoicing in the Lord? He means the joy that is the result of such a love of God as makes us simply wish that His will should be done in all things, and that feels positive joy in seeing the accomplishment of the divine will, quite apart from any personal advantage or disadvantage that may accrue to ourselves. This is the secret of true joy, for then what befalls ourselves is a matter of indifference to us. Be it weal or woe, success or failure, we rejoice in it simply because it is what God has ordained for us. This is the meaning of Our Lord's words, " Your joy no man taketh from you."

## 15.—Rejoice Always.

1. St. Paul goes beyond the mere command to rejoice, and to rejoice in the Lord ; he also bids us to rejoice always. Is this possible ? Yes, it is quite possible. If it were not, the Apostle would not have imposed it upon us. It is not easy, because our self-love and our selfishness destroy joy. But the saints, who had driven self-love out of their hearts, found it a pleasant and an easy task to be always joyful. If we desire the same, we must do our best to get rid of this hindrance to our joy.

2. How are we to accomplish this task ? It must be a gradual one. It is to be arrived at by many acts of submission to the will of God, and to the will of others when opposed to our own ; and the submission must have for its motive, not the intellectual conviction that what we ourselves desire is in itself inferior, but the determination to submit for the sake of submission, and as an act of reverence to God. We must be willing to submit both will and intellect to those set over us, without complaining or questioning their commands. Do I do so ?

3. When this painful process is over, and when at length we begin to learn the happiness of giving up our own will to the will of others, we soon begin to receive the reward of our self-conquest. We acquire by degrees an undisturbed calm of soul, and an increasing strength of will, as the fruits of our victory over self, and above all a happy consciousness that we have been learning the lesson of conforming our will to the will of God, in which the happiness of heaven consists.

## 16.—The Second Coming of Christ.

1. When the apostles on Mount Olivet were gazing after their Master, Who had just ascended into heaven, two angels stood by them and announced to them that He Who had just vanished from their sight would return in like manner. Our Lord Himself had already declared that He would come again with power and great glory and would sit upon the throne of His glory. At the sound of His approach the dead will rise from their graves to meet Him, and the nations of the world who have not accepted His sway will be filled with unspeakable terror and dismay. What will be the dispositions with which I shall rise again to meet Christ? What would they be now if He were to come to-day?

2. The object of His coming will be to judge the living and the dead. All that is now hidden will be made manifest before the world. All the secret thoughts and whispered words, and actions concealed from the eyes of men, will then be made manifest. How should I like to have all my base and low motives dragged to light, all my unkind words revealed to those against whom they were spoken, all those actions, of which I cannot myself think without shame, proclaimed so that all may behold them?

3. Our Lord will come, radiant in majesty and glory, to crush His enemies under His feet and reward His faithful soldiers and servants. How great then will be the ignominy and shame of the mighty men of earth, if they have not bowed their neck to the King of kings! How full of joy will be the hearts of all who have humbled themselves before Him! How will they be beautiful beyond compare, and honored before His holy angels! Learn now to humble yourself under the yoke of Christ.

## 17.—The Signs of His Coming.

1. One of the signs of the second coming of Our Lord being nigh at hand will be that no one will expect it. All the world will be satisfied that things will go on as hitherto for many a century, and they will ask: "Where is the promise of His coming?" In this too the life of the individual is often a miniature of the history of the world. Christ comes again to many an unexpected soul when sudden death, through some accident or unsuspected disease, carries off in a moment the man who thought he had long years to live. "Blessed is he whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

2. Another warning of Our Lord's approach will be the coming of Antichrist. He will be one whose authority and power will be a counterfeit of that of the Vicar of Christ. His distinguishing marks will be overweening pride, hatred of the Catholic Church, widespread dominion, a spirit of rebellion which will enlist in his service all who revolt against the authority that comes from God. Examine yourself to see if there lurks in you any of this dislike of lawful authority, and pray for the grace of loyalty to men for God's sake.

3. Before Our Lord's coming there will be a terrible persecution of the servants of God. In these days, when there is an ever-increasing spirit of tolerance, it is hard to understand this. But under the spirit of what is called religious liberalism lurks a deadly hatred of the Church of Christ. It breaks out from time to time, as in the French Commune. It slumbers now, but will blaze up again some day. Pray for grace to withstand all the assaults of the persecutor.



## 18.—The Uncertainty of His Coming.

1. Ever since Our Lord's Ascension into heaven, His servants have watched for His return, crying out: "Come, O Lord Jesus, come quickly!" In the days of the apostles, in the early ages of the Church, in mediæval times, men believed that His coming was close at hand. In these later days, it is true, the expectancy is not so immediate as it once was; but the very fact that we think the world has still centuries to run may be an indication that the end is not far away. Can I from my heart offer the prayer that His coming may not be long delayed?

2. Men sometimes tell us that when six thousand years have passed, the world will have run its course, and Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. It may be so; but rash indeed is he who ventures thus to fix the time, for it is Our Lord Himself Who tells us: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, nor the angels of God, but the Father only." One of the essential characteristics of that day will be its suddenness. Hence learn the importance of being always ready, and then you will be always safe.

3. We may not live till the second coming of Christ surprises the world; but we shall live until the day which is the call for us to judgment. That day is not far off; it may be very near, and the chance is that it will either come unexpectedly, or else will be preceded by a time which will be but a poor time for preparation. I must be prepared now, I must always be prepared for the moment when I hear the voice of God summoning me, and then the sooner that time comes the better for me.

## 19.—The Preparation for His Approach.

Who is there who does not desire to meet Jesus Christ, when He comes again, with joy and not with trembling? To insure this three things are necessary.

1. We must have friends among those who will come again with Him. Just as few die a happy death unless they have some advocates in heaven, so few indeed will meet Our Lord with joy unless they have some who will welcome them as having befriended them for Christ's sake. Unless we have been men of supernatural charity, we shall stand defenceless on that day. Alas! how faint and feeble my charity has been! how little I have done to procure friends who will plead for me on that day!

2. We must also have had the thought of Jesus often present to our minds in life, if His coming is to be a joyful one to us. He must be no stranger to us. He must have been our guide, our friend, our master, our companion. We must have walked with God on earth, if we are to walk with Him in the celestial paradise. The more familiar has been our friendship with Him, the greater will be our happiness in meeting Him again.

3. We must also have carried our cross willingly after Him on earth, if we are to meet Him with a well-grounded confidence of a great reward in the kingdom which He has won for His elect. O how overflowing will be the delight of those who have lived mortified and self-denying lives for His sake! What a trifle will all their sufferings then appear in comparison with their abounding joy when the archangel's trumpet sounds!

## 20.—The Dangers of the Careless Soul.

1. There is in human nature a fatal tendency to procrastinate, especially when that which we know we ought to do is something to which we are naturally disinclined. All men are naturally disinclined to do violence to themselves, and force their pride and self-will to yield before the sway of Christ, to put on His yoke and carry His cross. Hence men put off and make excuses to themselves and fancy that what is difficult to them to-day will be easy to them to-morrow. O fatal mistake! Each day that we postpone the task of submission it becomes more difficult, more distasteful. Why then do I not hasten to submit myself entirely to Christ?

2. From day to day the careless soul thus goes on putting off, crying: "To-morrow I will amend my ways;" and when to-morrow comes, it still cries: "To-morrow." How fatal is this folly! To-morrow may never come, or, if it comes, you may have forfeited the grace. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

3. This postponement is always accompanied by some deliberate disobedience to the commands or to the holy inspirations of the Spirit of God. Thus the careless soul becomes more engrossed in earthly things and more and more disinclined to make the necessary effort. Thus it is that so many will be surprised by the coming of their Judge at the moment when they least expect Him, and are quite unprepared to meet Him. O Jesus, save me at any cost from the deadly state of the careless soul!

## 21.—O Sapientia.

Before the feast of Christmas, the coming Saviour is welcomed in seven antiphons, which greet Him under various titles, and entreat Him to come quickly to enlighten and deliver His people.

“O Wisdom, Who camest forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching in Thy strength from end to end, and sweetly disposing all things, come and teach us the way of prudence.”

1. The first title given to Jesus is that of Wisdom. He was the Eternal Wisdom of God, and the source of all wisdom to men from one end of time to the other. With Him all wisdom; without Him no wisdom. Yet I have sometimes fancied myself wise when I was acting quite apart from Him, and perhaps His wishes or commands. What utter folly!

2. It is the Eternal Word that disposes all things sweetly. Everything that happens in heaven or earth is arranged by Him, and is arranged not unkindly, or harshly, or bitterly, but sweetly. Why then do I regret what I ought to know He has arranged sweetly, *i.e.*, with designs of love for me if I take it in the right spirit?

3. Come and teach us the way of prudence. This is our first petition to Him Who is to come. If only He imparts prudence, all must be well. Prudence chooses the right end, *viz.*, the glory of God, and the right means to the end, *viz.*, what we know God asks of us now, and in our present circumstances. Teach me, O Jesus, that lesson of prudence which will guide me safe to the kingdom of heaven.

## 22.—O Adonai.

“O Lord, and Leader of the house of Israel, Who didst appear to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush, and didst give to him the law on Mount Sinai, come to redeem us with Thy stretched-out arm.”

1. The Saviour for Whom we look is also Our Lord (Adonai), the Leader and Chief to whom we have sworn fealty. We speak of Him continually under the familiar name of Our Lord, and each time we do so we reassert our acknowledgment of the obligation to follow where He leads, and to be subject to Him in all things. O happy followers of such a Leader! If we tread in His footsteps, and obey His voice, He will set our feet in green pastures, and lead us to the fountains of the water of life.

2. The flame of fire in the burning bush was a figure of Jesus in Mary's sacred womb. Holy indeed was the place where God was present, and whence He promised to His people their deliverance from Egypt. So He still speaks as if concealed in Mary's womb, and reminds us that He has made her holy with a holiness second only to His own; and when we draw nigh to her we hear His voice announcing to us that He has heard our prayers offered through her, and will come to deliver us from our enemies.

3. What shall be our prayer to Him when He inspires us to make our request with boldness at the throne of grace? Come to redeem us with Thy stretched-out arm. Come to deliver us from the effects of our past sins. Come to deliver us from the attachment to some sin that still lurks within us. Come to deliver us from all our countless negligences and imperfections. Come with Thine arm stretched out to ward us from the foe, O Lord and Lover of our souls.

### 23.—O Radix Jesse.

“O Root of Jesse, Who standest for a sign to the nations, before Whom kings shall shut their mouth, of Whom the Gentiles shall entreat mercy; come to set us free, and no longer delay.”

1. The King Who is to come is of the root of Jesse, since He is of David's royal line. He is the true David, Who laid low the spiritual Goliath, the prince of darkness, who in pagan times defied the power of the living God. He is above all the Man after God's own heart, in that the one motive of His heart was to carry out His Father's will. If this is the motive power of my life, then I too am of the root of Jesse, and in spite of failings am a man after God's own heart, just in proportion as this motive is ever present to me.

2. Jesus is a sign to the nations; a sign of contradiction to His enemies, but before Whom the most powerful will have to shut their mouth in humble subjection; a sign to His friends, the men of good-will in every clime and country, who will be drawn to Him to offer their joyful homage at His feet, entreating of Him that mercy which He is more ready to grant than they to ask. To me He is a sign, either fondly loved, or neglected and treated as of no account.

3. O Root of Jesse, O King and Saviour, come and set us free; free from all that displeases Thee, free from the snares that entangle our feet, free from our perverse attachment to our own will, free from the power of the devil, free from our slowness in obeying Thy commands and holy inspirations, free from all that hinders us in Thy service; come and say the word, and we shall be delivered.

## 24.—O Clavis David.

“O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel ; Who openest and no man shutteth, and shuttest and no man openeth ; come and deliver from the prison-house the captive who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

1. The key and the sceptre are the symbols of supreme authority ; they indicate the sway that the Saviour is to hold over His faithful people, and the right which He alone possesses of opening the gate of heaven to the children of men, and of extending to them the golden sceptre of His mercy and forgiving love. To me, O Key of David, unworthy though I am, open in Thy mercy the door of heaven ; stretch out to me, all undeserving, the sceptre of Thy favor and Thy love.

2. Thou shuttest, O Lord, and no man opens. O shut not upon me the door which will admit me to draw nigh to Thee ! Shut not upon me the door of Thy mercy and grace. Shut not the door which leads me into the inner sanctuary of Thy love. Shut not the door of that fold wherein Thy favorite children dwell in peace and happiness. Shut not, above all, the door of paradise at my last hour.

3. Come then, O Lord, and open to me now the door of my captivity. I am a captive to my own self-will ; a captive to my want of charity ; a captive to my vanity and love of display ; a captive to my self-indulgence and dislike of mortification ; a captive to a thousand faults of which I am scarcely conscious. Come, O Lord, and set the captive free. I am weak, and cannot break my chains unless I receive from Thee the necessary strength ; come, O Lord Jesus, come quickly.

## 25.—O Oriens.

“O Orient, Splendor of eternal light and Sun of justice; come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

1. The night of pagan times was long and dark, and seemed hopeless. Deeper and deeper the nations were sinking in misery and vice. But at length the Orient, the brightness of the eternal light of heaven, rose, and scattered the darkness, changing the gloom into a brilliant day. So too for those who have been long shrouded in the dense gloom of sin or sorrow there waits the same divine Light, ready to scatter their darkness in a moment, if only they will draw nigh to Him. He waits for me, ready to brighten my path, to scatter my sins and sorrows, if I will avail myself of His love.

2. That rising Light is the Sun of justice, Who shall exercise His justice in delivering the captive, and in recompensing His friends a hundred, nay, a thousandfold, for every little service done to Him. For His justice is virtually identical with His mercy, and rejoices to employ itself in works of pity and of love.

3. Come then, O Orient, O Sun of justice; shine on those who sit in darkness, on those who are enveloped in the thick mists of heathendom and heresy. Come and enlighten their ignorance, that they may not perish. Come and deliver them from the shadow of death, for they cannot deliver themselves. Pour upon them such a flood of light and grace as may guide their feet into the way of peace.



## 26.—O Rex Gentium.

“O King of the nations and desired of them, and the Corner-stone that maketh both one, come and save man, whom Thou didst form of dust.”

1. Never was there a king who had such a claim to sovereignty as Christ Our Lord. He is King by divine appointment and His own right. He is King by the consentient voice of His subjects, and by the right of conquest. He is King by reason of His having purchased us with His own blood. What unnumbered claims He has on me! and besides all the rest, does He not deserve to reign supreme by reason of His having won me by His love?

2. Christ was desired by all nations, long before they knew Him Whom they desired. The heathen world felt a craving want, which it could not define, but which was the desire for the Saviour Who should free them from the bondage of sin. So now men of good-will outside the Church feel something of the same strange longing. Nothing will satisfy it save submission to their King by union with His mystical body, the Church of God. Oh, how happy am I, whose desires are fulfilled in that I am no alien, but a servant of that King Whom to serve is my own desire!

3. Christ is the Corner-stone that maketh both one; the King of peace, Whose work it is to unite together those who love Him in the unity of mutual love of one another for His sake. Thus He desires that I should be united to those around me, that there should be no dissension or disunion. Do I in this fulfil the pleasure of my King?

## 27.—O Emmanuel.

“ O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of the nations and their Saviour, come to save us, O Lord our God ! ”

1. Emmanuel, God with us, is a name that in every way belongs to Christ Our Lord. He is with His people in all their needs, ever ready to help and console them. He is with us on every altar, waiting for us to come and pour out before Him our sorrow and our needs. He is with us, above all, in Holy Communion, when He comes to dwell in our heart, and to bring with Him every grace that we need. He is with us in the hour of death, and He will be with us forever in heaven.

2. He Who thus comes to dwell with us in familiar friendship is our King ; He Who thus condescends to be our companion is the God Who has an absolute right to our obedience. He is our Lawgiver, and the statutes that He enacts for us have but one end and aim and object, to lead His subjects into the ways of happiness and the paths of peace.

3. Come then, O God, our Lord and our Saviour. Come and save us from all the perils of the Evil One, and from our own weakness and frailty. Come and save us in the hour of temptation, for Thou alone art our King, and none save Thou shalt rule over us. Come and bring us safe through this valley of tears to Thy eternal kingdom, where we shall dwell forever, O sweet Jesus, in the everlasting delights of Thy blissful company.

## 28.—Christmas Eve.

1. How did Mary and Joseph spend the first Christmas Eve? St. Joseph spent it in a fruitless attempt to find a lodging for his holy spouse. Vainly he sought for a place in the caravansery or inn, where travellers were received. Vainly he went from house to house in Bethlehem. Everywhere he was disappointed. Thus it is that God prepares His saints and chosen ones for some signal blessing. We must not be cast down by the fruitlessness of our efforts. It is a sign that some great grace is close at hand.

2. Mary meantime was patiently waiting. She was simply praying that God's will might be done, whatever suffering it might bring to her. She was offering herself to God, to be used by Him as He should see fit. She was making acts of perfect conformity to the will of God in all things. Blessed are those who wait patiently in such a spirit. God will soon fulfil all the desires of their heart.

3. Yet Mary and Joseph, in spite of the sorrow of the one and the anxiety of the other, were both of them overflowing with heavenly consolations. How could it be otherwise, when one of them carried Christ in her chaste womb, and the other was more dear to God than any other of the sons of men, for he was Mary's chosen spouse, and he knew that before another day was past she was to bring forth into the world the Son of God. Our happiness, like that of Joseph and Mary, does not depend upon external circumstances, but on the love that we bear to God in our hearts.

**The Great Truths.**  
**SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT.**



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## 1st Day.—God our Lord.

*The Lord hath made all things for Himself.*  
(Prov. xvi. 4.)

1. We are all of us jealous of what belongs to ourselves. We resent it if any one interferes with it, or deprives us of any portion of it. Yet no one owns anything by a title so absolute as that by which God is the Lord and Owner of all creatures in the universe. My body and my soul are His; everything I possess is His; every action, every thought belongs to Him. He has given all these in charge to me to use for Him. Do I do so?

2. God is, moreover, a God infinite in knowledge and in power. His all-seeing eye overlooks nothing, forgets nothing, passes nothing by. No one shall escape who takes anything from Him and does not give Him His due. Have I not therefore cause to tremble when I think how often I have behaved as if I were my own master, independent of God?

3. Yet in the end I must recognize God's ownership; if I do not do so willingly and with joyful loyalty, I shall have to do so unwillingly and in misery and pain. Everything I have taken from God and appropriated to myself will have to be given back to Him. I shall have to pay the penalty for each misuse of what was entrusted to me. How much wiser and happier to recognize Him now in all things as my Lord and Master!

Offer yourself to God with loyal submission as your God and Lord.



## 2d Day.—God our Creator.

*Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things. (Apoc. iv. 11.)*

1. Why is it that God has such an absolute and all-embracing claim to ourselves and to all that is ours? It is because we are made by Him, and not only made, but created. We are His not only as the statue is the sculptor's and the picture the painter's, but He made out of nothing the very materials of which we consist. There is therefore nothing in us which is not God's. Every sort of excellence, strength, virtue, talent, beauty, skill, energy, affection—all are God's, not our own.

2. God created every one with certain gifts of his own that He did not give to another, and He gave him those gifts to do a special work that God had for him to do. He created *me* with a certain object; from all eternity He had been planning my soul and body, and providing me with all that I needed, that both one and the other might serve Him. Have I on the whole carried out God's plan? Shall I be able to say, when I come to die: "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do"?

3. What a serious thought this is, that God had a plan for my life! He meant me to occupy a certain position in society and to have certain employments; to influence certain persons for good, to overcome certain temptations, to practise certain virtues beyond the rest, to attain a certain place in heaven. Has my life been ordered by God's holy inspirations? has not my own self-will too often had part in it?

Pray that you may not fail of fulfilling God's intentions concerning you.

### 3d Day.—God our Preserver.

*In Him we live and move and are.* (Acts xvii. 28.)

1. If God had merely created us and then left us to ourselves, there would have been some excuse for our forgetting how completely we belong to Him. But we are not like a picture that the artist finishes off and then leaves to itself. God continues throughout our whole life the act of creation in the shape of preservation. Without this we should at once lapse into our previous nothingness. We depend upon Him for our being as the rivulet depends on the spring, or the smoke on the fire.

2. But we not only live in Him, but we also move in Him. He co-operates with our every action. We cannot lift a hand or move a finger unless He not only sanctions the act but actually helps us to perform it. Every breath we breathe, every pulsation of our heart, depends on God's co-operation. How completely dependent we are on Him! How careful should we be that our every action is one suitable to the divine co-operation!

3. God does more than this. He not only preserves us, but tends us with watchful care, delivers us from dangers, warns us when we are going wrong, shows a never-failing interest in us, and an unceasing desire for our happiness. For all this we are dependent on Him! What folly, then, to neglect one to whom we owe everything!

Pray for a sense of continual dependence on God.

#### **4th Day.—God our Best Friend.**

*All are Thine, O Lord, who lovest souls.* (Wisdom xi. 27.)

1. Friendship is one of the consolations of man upon earth. One faithful friend is worth a hundred acquaintances. A friend who values our friendship for its own sake is a treasure without price. Such a friend we have in God. He has nothing to gain from my friendship, His infinite happiness is not increased by it. Yet His infinite goodness includes an intense desire to make me happy.

2. When we have a faithful friend who is possessed of unlimited influence and power, we consult him in all our difficulties. God is of all friends the most faithful and the most powerful; He desires to be consulted by us in things small as well as great, never tiring of our requests, more ready to hear than we to pray. Yet how little have I had recourse to Him hitherto! How little I have trusted Him!

3. The best proof of a friend's love is a desire for our company. In this what friend like God? He asks us, begs us, commands us to be always in His presence: "Walk with God and be thou perfect." His one object in all His advice to us is to secure our company forever in heaven. Why am I so indifferent about His presence, so soon weary of God?

Pray that you may appreciate and relish the divine  
friendship of God.

## 5th Day—God the End of our Life.

*Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God.*

(St. Matt. vi. 33.)

1. Our life is a circle: whence it first came, thither it must return. As we proceeded from God, so we must go back to Him if our life is to be a success. We can never find repose or lasting satisfaction in anything except God. As long as we do not tend to Him, we shall be fluctuating, inconstant, uncertain. Until we make Him the end of our life, we shall feel that we are wandering about in the dark.

2. What do we mean by making God the *end* of our life? We mean that to do His pleasure shall be the motive which shall be first and foremost, and that when there is a choice between God's pleasure and our own, when the two seem to be opposed, our general disposition shall be to do God's will and not our own. In spite of the pain involved in giving up his own will, the man who makes God the end of his life will give it up without hesitation, and so will draw nearer to God, his last end.

3. Every time we do this we break down a barrier between God and ourselves; we come nearer to the enjoyment of Him, we get a bit closer to heaven. The self-willed man is never satisfied; the man whose will is perfectly subject to God is always happy. The angels are always happy because they have no will but God's. If I want to find happiness in this world or the next, the first thing is to learn to submit my will to God.

Pray God to break down your self-will at any cost.

## 6th Day.—How to attain our End.

*One thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark.* (Philipp. iii. 13, 14.)

1. Every one desires to succeed in life. A man who desired ultimate failure would justly be regarded as a lunatic. If I am to carry out my desire, I must look round me and see what sort of men succeed.

2. When I look at successful men, I find in all three characteristics:

(1) A spirit of cheerfulness and confidence. They know how to look at everything from its best side. Hence I must pray for confidence.

(2) A spirit of perseverance. They are not discouraged by failures. They recover themselves without delay. What a lesson for me not to lose heart, but to say, When I fall I will rise again, and that promptly!

(3) A spirit of single-mindedness. They keep the end in view steadily before them. If I am to attain to the end of my life, to succeed in coming to God at last, I must keep Him always before me.

3. What can make my life so happy as this, to know that I am drawing nearer to God? Yet there will be dark times and days of despondency. Still down at the bottom, beneath the surface, there will be hope and peace, even amid the darkness.

Pray for cheerfulness and an earnest purpose to live for God.

## 7th Day.—The Models to be imitated.

*They are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. (Apoc. vii. 15.)*

Example is better than precept; and we shall often learn more from watching those who do perfectly what we are trying to acquire than by any set of rules. Let us watch the saints in heaven, that we may learn from them.

1. Their continual occupation is the praise of God, the tranquil delight of basking in the light of God. This satisfies every longing of their heart, this fills them with perfect and unfading joy. This is the highest praise they can render to God. How can I imitate them? By a continual remembrance of God, by visiting the Blessed Sacrament, by a frequent raising of my heart to heaven.

2. The saints also find a constant joy in showing reverence to God, in falling down in prostrate homage before the throne, in recognizing their dependence upon Him, and their indebtedness to Him for all their joy. This, too, I can copy by great reverence both of body and soul; reverence before the altar, reverence in my prayers, reverence and resignation to the will of God in my thoughts.

3. The saints and angels also serve God by doing His bidding, whether by their homage in heaven, or by carrying His graces and messages to men. Their joy is to do the will of God and finish His work. I, too, in my feeble way can serve God, I can really be of service to Him by every act of love and especially by every act of kindness to others.

Pray that your life may prepare you for the company of the saints in heaven.

### 8th Day.—The Means provided.

*Thou hast subjected all things under His feet. (Ps. viii. 8.)*

We are all inclined to overlook our own importance in God's sight. So dearly does He love us, so anxious is He that we should attain our end, that we should succeed in life, that He has heaped around us all kinds of means and helps thereto.

1. All that is lovely and beautiful in the world is intended by Almighty God to help me on my road to heaven, to remind me of Him and of His infinite beauty. God cares more for me than all the material universe together, all irrational creatures. I can give Him more glory by one act of love than by all their natural perfections.

2. God has also given me my parents, companions, superiors, all as means to assist me in serving God. They were all created for me; even those who cause me pain are in God's design to be sources of merit and even of happiness to me. They may be my best friends. If, for instance, I am patient towards those who are trying to my patience, kind towards those who treat me unkindly, I derive from them a solid gain: they help me on the way to heaven.

3. All the various circumstances of my life are moreover ordained by Almighty God to aid me in serving and praising Him as He wishes. If they are pleasant, they must teach me gratitude; if painful, resignation. Even if they are a source of temptation to me, by fighting bravely against the temptation I can gain great merit before God.

**Pray for grace to carry out God's intentions by using aright all the circumstances around you.**

### **9th Day.—The Dispositions necessary.**

*If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome.*  
(St. Matt. vi. 22.)

In order to make a good use of the various means afforded us of making progress towards true happiness, we must consider what should be our state of mind respecting them.

1. We must be on the watch to see that our inclinations do not run away with us. Most of the foolish things we do are the result of acting on impulse, of being led by our inclinations, of being influenced by wounded self-love. How many a golden opportunity of merit we have missed because we would not accept patiently what wounded us or hurt our self-esteem!

2. We must try to make ourselves ready to accept whatever God sends, whether painful or pleasant. We must take willingly and cheerfully sickness, pain, unkindness, neglect, failure, poverty; and though nature may cry out against it, yet we must keep our will united to God's so as to be always able to say: "Not my will be done, O my God, but Thine."

3. We must try to look on the bright side of everything. There is nothing in the world that has not a bright side. This will make us always patient, and, what is more, always happy. We shall acquire a facility for ignoring or passing over the painful side of things, to look at the joyful and hopeful. Do I try to do this, or do I often grumble and repine?

Offer to God your willingness to endure whatever He sees to be good for your soul.



## 10th Day.—The Cause of our Failure.

*He that shall sin, shall hate his own soul.* (Prov. viii. 36.)

Hitherto we have been speaking of the means of reaching the end for which we were created and in which alone we shall find true and lasting satisfaction. We now come to the cause of our failure, and the obstacles in our way.

1. There is only one obstacle in our way, only one real hindrance to our progress towards happiness and peace, only one barrier between us and God. This obstacle is sin. As long as it remains it is an insuperable obstacle. A single mortal sin unrepented of will shut me out forever from the presence of God. A single venial sin unatoned for will prevent me from attaining to happiness until the debt has been paid.

2. What do we mean by sin? We mean any conscious violation of the law of God. Whenever we do that which God has declared to be a serious offence against Him, we become the enemies of God, we forfeit all hope of heaven, except as far as God of His gratuitous compassion may afterwards give us the grace to repent and be forgiven. Have I ever thus lost sight of God and of heaven? And if so, am I sure that I have regained His love?

3. Why is sin so terrible? Because it is an outrage on a God of infinite holiness, of infinite majesty. Because it is an act of ingratitude to one who has laden us with benefits, who loves us with a love that surpasses all bound or measure; because it is a deliberate rejection of the divine friendship, and, as far as we are concerned, forever.

**Pray for a hatred and detestation of sin.**

## 11th Day.—The First Sin.

*God spared not the angels that sinned* (2 St. Peter ii. 4.)

1. There was a time when sin was unknown in God's universe. All creatures obeyed Him and were happy and at peace. Thousands and tens of thousands of holy angels showed forth the glory of God by their joyful obedience. Created in a state of supernatural grace they were each in his own degree full of wisdom, of perfect beauty.

2. Their trial during their time of probation consisted in having to acknowledge their dependence on, and their subjection to, God. The larger number of them did so in a spirit of loyal and unwavering obedience. But a third portion of them, led by Lucifer, refused to obey. They conceived an inordinate love of themselves, and from this arose a desire to be independent with God. They would not humble themselves, they considered it unworthy of them that they should submit to the will of God in all things. Thus pride grew up within them; and they deliberately placed themselves in opposition to God.

3. This open rebellion to God lasted but a moment. In an instant all their supernatural beauty was gone, the malice of their souls corrupted their whole being. All their beauty was turned to loathsome foulness. Cast out of God's heaven, they were hurled down to the lowest hell; outcasts to all eternity, filled with eternal misery and despair. And all this the effect of one sin, and that a sin of thought!

Beg of God an appreciation of the unspeakable evil of  
sin.

## 12th Day.—Man's First Sin.

*Pride is the beginning of all sin.* (Ecclus. x. 15.)

1. In Paradise before the Fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed a happiness beyond compare. They knew no pain, sickness, sorrow. They were created immaculate, and adorned with a high degree of supernatural grace; they were exempt from all concupiscence; their lives passed in a continual round of unfailing delight; each evening God Himself came to hold sweet converse with them.

2. What was it ruined their happiness? The tempter came and suggested to Eve a distrust of God, whispered into her ear motives of disobedience. Eve listened and consented, and in her heart deliberately revolted against God. Pride brought with it concupiscence; she looked at the fruit that God had forbidden, took it, ate it, gave it to Adam. He also ate it, and thus lost for himself and all his posterity the gift of original justice and all the graces and blessings that accompanied it. One single sin ruined the world. How ought I to dread and hate sin!

3. What was the history of this first sin? The same as of every sin. First the listening to the tempter's voice; then a jealousy of God as of one who interferes with our happiness; then a positive revolt and undisguised pride; and after this every other sin, especially the indulgence of bodily appetite and depraved desires. If I examine myself I shall find that each sin I commit follows the same course.

Pray to avoid the first beginnings of sin.

## 13th Day.—The Temporal Consequences of Adam's Sin.

*In Adam all die.* (1 Cor. xv. 22.)

No sooner had this first sin been consummated than a blight fell upon the world. It had become the devil's empire, for he had made Adam its king, his slave. What are the consequences to the inhabitants of the world?

1. Adam and Eve were cast out of Paradise never again to enter. Their peace was gone, there was confusion within them, concupiscence fought against reason. Pain and sorrow came upon them; and disease, and death. For nine hundred years they toiled painfully in weariness upon the earth, and after their death had to wait three thousand years more before they were admitted to the heavenly Paradise. And all for one sin!

2. The effects of their sin were not limited to themselves alone. All their descendants inherited from them an inheritance of woe. All the wars, famines, pestilences, all the broken hearts, all the wretched lives of millions, had their source in this one sin. How almost infinite the consequences of sin are! Yet I think so little of my sins, and of the punishment that I shall have to pay for them.

3. If we would behold the full malice of Adam's sin, we must stand beneath the cross, and watch our God dying in unutterable anguish. It was sin that nailed Him to the cross. It was sin that forced from Him His agonizing cry: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Pray for a horror of sin corresponding to its intensity of evil.

## 14th Day.—The Sins of Individual Men.

*I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul.* (Ps. xxxviii. 15.)

1. When we look at the sin of Adam and see the consequences it entailed, what shall we say of the consequences that the sins of each one of us are likely to bring upon our heads? Adam's was a single sin, as opposed to our countless offences. He did not appreciate the results of sin as we do, he had not witnessed the misery that comes from it as we do, he had not seen the flames of hell kindled by sin as we do. How much more grievous, then, are the offences of each one of us!

2. We must remember, too, that Adam's sin was forgiven the very day it was committed, and God in His mercy sealed His forgiveness by the promise of the Redeemer. Yet see the consequences of forgiven sin! The long penance, the spread of moral corruption, the disease and death, the misery and sorrow, the banishment from the face of God, all these still remained although the guilt of sin was gone. What reason, then, for me to tremble at the thought of all my past sins!

3. I will glance over my past life and try to recall a few of my many offences. What a career mine has been! What ingratitude to God! What selfishness, what uncharitableness to others, what meanness, what unfaithfulness to grace, what impurity, what low motives of action, what forgetfulness of God, what idle words, what waste of time, what continual following of my own inclinations! How can I hope to escape the just judgments of God?

**Pray for shame and contrition at the sight of your sins.**

## 15th Day.—The Eternal Consequences of Sin.

*Whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the pool of fire. (Apoc. xx. 15.)*

Try to represent to your imagination the eternal prison-house. Listen to the shrieks and yells and cries of despair that issue thence; see the agony written on the faces of the inmates; approach, if you can, to the devouring flame, taste the burning thirst that longs for one drop of water as an indescribable luxury.

1. What is it that the lost are suffering here? The pain of fire. Touch a piece of red-hot iron and see how long you can bear it. Yet the lost souls in hell endure an agony far worse than this, not in one portion of their body, but in all. Their eyes burn in the sockets like molten balls of fire. The fire surrounds them like water; nay, it is within and without them, it dries up their tongue, it consumes their entrails, it penetrates to the very marrow of their bones. My God, may I never incur this agony!

2. This fire is no ordinary fire. It is a supernatural fire; the breath of God kindles it. The torment of burning as known to us is a suffering far less than the torment of hell. If the lost could be transferred to a bath of seething, molten lead, it would be a far less suffering than that of the fire in which they are steeped in hell.

3. About this fire there is none of the light of ordinary fire. It carries with it the blackness of darkness. No ray of light will ever pierce its hideous gloom, no word of comfort, no sort of relief, no hope of change. Nothing to alleviate the eternal misery that comes of sin.

Pray that if the love of God or hope of heaven does not keep you from sinning, at least the fear of hell-fire may stop you in time!

## 16th Day.—The Aggravations of Hell.

*Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it. (Ps. cxxxi.14.)*

Every thought of the lost will aggravate, not alleviate, their sufferings. Let us review one or two of the thoughts that will be ever present to their minds.

1. They might so easily have been saved! One act of contrition at the last, one grace accepted out of the countless graces that were deliberately set at naught, and they might have been with the angels in heaven instead of with the devils in hell. To know that we have just missed some advantage that we might with a little trouble have secured for ourselves is always a tormenting thought. How much more when it is heaven that is lost!

2. If the advantage is lost purely through our own fault, this greatly increases our misery. We fools! We had so many chances, we knew so well that we were forfeiting our eternal inheritance! It is this that changes sorrow into remorse, and adds to suffering the horror and blackness of despair. All through our own fault! What a thought to dwell with me through all eternity!

3. What is it that we have lost? That will be the bitterest thought of all. We have lost the sweet music of heaven, we have lost the company of the saints and angels, we have lost the enchanting happiness of gazing on the Sacred Humanity of Jesus in all its glory, and, above all, we have lost the unspeakable joy of the beatific vision. We fools!

Pray God that the dread of this thought hereafter may keep you from sin.

## 17th Day.—The Eternity of Hell.

*This is my rest forever and ever.* (Ps. cxxxii. 14.)

1. The worst aggravation of the sufferings of hell is that they will never end. If only they would cease or be alleviated after a thousand or a million years, the day of hope would shine on the inmates of that prison-house, even though far away in the dim distance. It is the knowledge that at the end of countless millions of years they will still be suffering as now, that makes the agony of the lost so intolerable. Forever, never! Forever, never!

2. Add to this the frightful monotony of their torments. How wearily the time drags on through a night sleepless on account of acute pain! But what will be the monotony of anguish that will make those endless ages drag along in unchanging misery? Nothing to vary the blackness of darkness around them; nothing to vary the worm of remorse ever gnawing at their heart; nothing to vary the excruciating agony of the fire that will never be quenched.

3. All this is the necessary result of their being fixed in an unchanging enmity to God. If only they could receive in their souls one spark of the love of God, hell would at once cease to be hell. One thought of love would turn their agony of despair into joyful hope. But no such thought will ever come to them.

**Make acts of love of God, and ask Him that you may never be separated from Him by sin.**



## 18th Day.—Venial Sin.

*With these [wounds] I was wounded in the house of them that loved me. (Zach. xiii. 6.)*

1. Venial sin does not, like mortal sin, kill the soul and make us the enemies of God; but it is a disease which disfigures the soul and renders it unfit for union with Him until it has been purged away. It is the path that leads to hell by paving the way little by little for the entrance of mortal sin. It is an unkindness which destroys the warmth of our love and creates a coldness towards God.

2. Venial sin is small as compared with mortal sin, but it is small only as ten thousand years are small compared with eternity. It is the greatest evil in the whole world with the exception of mortal sin. It is committed against an Infinite God. It can only be expiated by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; it will add to the sufferings of the lost to all eternity.

3. Venial sin is of two kinds: (1) Deliberate, when, knowing that what I am about to do will give pain to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I nevertheless do it to gratify myself. This is the worst kind, and the guilt of it is sometimes very great. (2) Indeliberate, or semi-deliberate, when on impulse or without thinking I do what is faulty. Yet I might have foreseen the danger and been more vigilant.

Ask God to help you to appreciate the evil of one venial sin.

## 19th Day.—The Punishment of Venial Sin.

*Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.* (St. Matt. v. 26.)

Venial sin is the great evil in the world next to mortal sin, and therefore it deserves a punishment greater than all the miseries of earth. God has taught us what sort of an evil it is by one or two instances of the way in which He visits it in this life.

1. Moses; the friend of God, the chosen ruler of His people, the meekest of men, to whom God conversed as friend with friend, once committed a venial sin. He gave way to momentary impatience and lost his temper under provocation. For this God denied him admission into the promised land. After his long and faithful service, God sent him up to die on Mount Nebo before the Jordan was crossed. All the forty years of weary travel did not avail him; the venial sin cut him off before the goal was reached.

2. David, the man after God's own heart, in a moment of vanity determined to number the people, boastfully priding himself on the strength of his fighting men. In punishment of this, God sent a pestilence which in less than three days destroyed seventy thousand of the Israelites. Jerusalem itself would have been decimated had not David entreated God to avert His destroying hand. How God must hate venial sin!

3. After death there will remain for most a debt to be still paid for venial sin. It is in purgatory that we shall see its true character. No earthly agony even approaches the agony of the purgatorial fire. The souls God loves must be tormented there till they have paid the last farthing. Alas! what do I still owe? Am I doing my best to pay the debt and avoid adding to it?

Beg for an intense dread of venial sin.

## 20th Day.—Death.

*It is appointed unto men once to die.* (Heb. ix. 27.)

1. Why is death a terror to men? Because it is the punishment of sin, the penalty that was attached by God Himself to the first transgression of His law—"In the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt die the death." For this reason we shrink from it as the mark and sign of our fallen and degraded condition. Disease, corruption, old age, decay, are its forerunners, and are invested with the same reproach as testimonies to our being born in sin.

2. Death is the end of our time of trial. After it our destiny will be irrevocably fixed. No more chance of doing penance, no more opportunities of contrition, no more merit, no more grace, no more calls to repentance, no more hope for those who reject God in this life. No wonder, then, that men dread it. Yet death is standing at our very doors; at any moment the King of Terrors may summon us away. Am I prepared for the summons?

3. Yet to those who love God death loses all its terrors. For them it is the beginning of their true life. All their hopes have been directed to the unseen world; why should they fear? Their heart is in heaven and their treasure is in heaven, their King and Lord is there, and all their dearest and best friends, and the angels and the saints. How happy are those who are thus detached from this world and ever look to the world to come!

Pray for a happy death.

## 21st Day.—The Particular Judgment.

*We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ.* (2 Cor. v. 10.)

1. At the Particular Judgment we shall see our lives as they never appeared to us before. In an instant we shall live them over again. Each thought, word, act, will be clear and distinct, with its true character no longer hidden by our own wilful blindness, but in all its foulness, baseness, ingratitude, revealed to us in the bright light of God.

2. We shall then stand face to face with Jesus Christ, no longer as our Advocate, but as our Judge; no longer pleading for us, but dealing out strict justice, according to our deserts. He will be clothed with a divine glory that will attract us and at the same time fill us with dismay at the thought of having offended Him. St. Teresa said that what struck her most forcibly in the vision she had of Him was how awful would be the anger of one so full of divine sweetness.

3. Yet we need not fear the judgment if we make Christ our friend now. If we earn His gratitude by doing all we can to please Him, He will not remember our former sins. He will look to what we are, not what we have been. He will not remember the sins of those who love Him with all their hearts. The same St. Teresa said: "Why should I fear the judgment when my Judge will be my best friend?"

Pray that you may forestall the judgment by a careful examination of your conscience now, and an earnest desire to please your Judge.

## 22d Day.—The General Judgment.

*Behold He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. (Apoc. i. 7.)*

1. At the General Judgment Christ *as man* will be the Judge of men, because He is at once God and man. He will therefore have not only the most intimate knowledge of all our lives, but a sympathy with us, an understanding of our nature from experience, that will give Him in the natural order the highest qualifications for being our Judge.

2. On that day what a complete reverse there will be of all the world's unjust verdicts! How many, now ridiculed, despised, condemned, will then be glorious and honored before men and angels! What will my sentiments be on that day when the thoughts of all hearts will be revealed?

3. On the right of the Judge will be the sheep, on the left, the goats; the one overflowing with celestial delights, the other already filled with the despair of hell. What will distinguish between them? Simply this, whether they have shown charity to others for Christ's sake. This and nothing else will be the test—"Inasmuch as you have done it to one of My least brethren you have done it to Me." How shall I stand this test?

Ask God to teach you how to secure a place on the right hand of the Judge.

### 23d Day.—The Final Sentence.

*The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting.* (St. Matt. xxv. 46.)

1. The sentence pronounced at the Last Judgment will be one of perfect justice. Every little circumstance will be taken into account; inherited character, natural disposition, fierce passions, favorable or unfavorable circumstances, early training, opportunities of grace, sacraments, temptations, everything. All who are lost will confess that they have been treated with perfect justice, that it was their own fault, that it was they who condemned themselves to eternal separation from God.

2. The sentence will be not only just but merciful. All the lost will acknowledge that their punishment is less than they deserved. They will recognize an element of mercy, and will be forced amid their despair and hatred of God, amid their curses and blasphemies, to confess that they have been leniently dealt with in comparison with their sins.

3. The sentence will be irrevocable. Even at the Particular Judgment the soul will know its final destiny. But at the General Judgment the sentence will be confirmed and ratified in the presence of the holy angels and the assembled crowd. How strange it is, then, that in view of this we take so little trouble to secure a favorable sentence!

Pray that to you may be addressed the gracious words:

“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

## 24th Day.—The End attained.

*Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* (St. Matt. xxv. 34.)

1. What will be the sentiments of those who at the General Judgment will find themselves on the right hand of the Judge, and listen to His words of love? First of all they will overflow with a delicious sense of happiness and peace; they will scarcely be able to contain themselves with delight; unmixed and unalloyed will be their cup of joy, unlike any of the joys of earth, intoxicating them with its ineffable sweetness.

2. They will also be amazed and astonished at the reward given to them. What have I done, O Lord, to deserve all this? When did I minister to Thee as Thou sayest? When did I do anything to earn Thy words of gratitude? Who am I that Thou shouldst thus exalt me? All the little that I did came from Thee, and now Thou rewardest me as if it was my own. We bless Thee, we praise Thee, for Thy great goodness, Thine unspeakable generosity.

3. They will also look back with wonder on their earthly life. While it lasted it seemed so long, so tedious, perhaps so miserable, and now it is like a moment in the past, like a shadow that flitted by. How infinitesimal all its sorrows and pains will then seem, all compensated by that first moment of ineffable delight!

Seek to bear that day in mind when earthly sorrows  
press heavily.

## 25th Day.—Heaven.

*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. (1 Cor. ii. 9.)*

1. These words convey the best idea that the Apostle who had been carried up into the third heaven could give of the happiness of the redeemed. All the loveliest things we have ever seen are as nothing in comparison to the sight of heaven; all the sweetest sounds are discord compared with the music of heaven; all the joys that have made the longest hours only too short do not deserve the name of joy compared with the joys of heaven. One moment of heaven is worth them all!

2. Whatever God does He does on a scale worthy of Himself. The happiness of heaven will be immeasurable from the fact of its being in union with the God of infinite love and beauty. It will be a joy like the joy of Our Lord Himself, since He will say to each of the redeemed: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Am I doing what I can to insure those words being addressed to me?

3. In heaven all will be perfectly happy. Even those who have the lowest places will have all that their hearts desire. There will be no unsatisfied wish in heaven, no craving after what we do not possess. Every one will have an overflowing cup of pleasure. Oh, what fools we are not to do more to insure the joy of heaven!

Pray that you may often think of heaven and its joys.



## **26th Day.—The Essential Happiness of Heaven.**

*We shall see Him as He is.* (1 St. John iii. 2.)

1. The one central source of heaven's happiness will be the vision of God. We shall see Him face to face in all His divine beauty; everything will be swallowed up in the absorbing delight of gazing on the majesty of the Most High. If the lost in hell could see God for a single instant, hell would at once become heaven to them.

2. Why is this? Because in God are united every perfection and every beauty and every joy and every delight that exist or can exist, and all in an infinite degree. Every other joy is but a shadow as compared with the substance, a grain of dust compared with the loftiest mountains, a drop of water compared with the ocean. O my God, help me to despise the passing joys of earth when I think of the joy of seeing Thee!

3. The beatific vision will not convey the same degree of happiness to all who gaze upon it. It will depend upon our union with God on earth, on our faithfulness to grace, on our personal sanctity. One star differs from another star in glory. What folly, then, if we let slip any of the eternal reward for the sake of some perishable trifle or miss any opportunity of adding to our treasure of heavenly delight!

**Pray that you may appreciate your heavenly treasure, and strive continually to add to it.**

## 27th Day.—The Employments of Heaven.

*His servants shall serve Him.* (Apoc. xxii. 3.)

1. While faith and hope will be at an end in heaven, the virtue of charity will remain. There is nothing on earth so sweet as love; nothing that fills the heart with such continual joy; nothing that so occupies the soul and causes men to forget all else. This is the case when the object of our love is a perishable imperfect creature like ourselves. How much more when the object of our love is the God of infinite beauty, containing in Himself every possible earthly perfection, not only multiplied to an infinite degree, but altogether higher in kind, and therefore a source of greater joy than all possible created beauty!

2. A strong love makes the long hours pass away in a stream of unceasing delight; no weariness, no monotony, no desire for anything else. One thing only checks the perfection of the happiness of love, and that is the thought that it cannot last forever. In heaven there will be a stream of delight immeasurably richer, and the joyful consciousness that there is no fear of its ever coming to an end.

3. As God is infinite in His perfections, they will necessarily be inexhaustible. The various phases (if we may use the term) of His divine loveliness will never come to an end. After a million years there will still be the same inexhaustible treasure of multiform delights to be enjoyed, and after a million years it will not be diminished. No fear, then, of sameness in heaven, no fear of monotony, it will ever be the same and yet ever new.

Pray for a greater love of God here on earth.

## 28th Day.—The Music of Heaven.

*They sung as it were a new canticle.* (Apoc. xiv. 3.)

1. Every one has read the story of the monk who once sat down in a wood near a monastery and wondered whether heaven would not after a time lose its charm. A little bird began to sing a song so sweet that he sat entranced. After a few minutes, as it seemed to him, the song ceased and he returned to his monastery to find that he had sat there and listened for twenty years. If this could be the case when it was but one little bird singing, what must be the absorbing delight of the music of the angels and saints in heaven!

2. This music will combine the beauty of every earthly instrument and of the sweetest of earthly singers. No notes were ever heard on earth like the notes of the virgins, boys and girls, men and women, who will sing a heavenly melody that will never cease; and each note will be such that if we heard it on earth, we should despise all pain and suffering, nay, death itself, for the joy of listening to it.

3. There will be a still sweeter music for the blessed in heaven, a music which makes the music of the saints and angels seem almost discord. The voice of Jesus Christ will be heaven's sweetest melody; if on earth men hung on His lips, if never man spake like that Man, what will be the divine attraction of every word, every sound that will proceed from his lips in heaven! How each word will ravish the souls of all the saints in heaven! O my God, grant that I may hear that voice in heaven.

Pray that you may listen and obey Christ's voice speaking to your heart on earth.

## 29th Day.—The Companions of Heaven.

*Their lot is among the saints.* (Wisdom v. 5.)

1. How much of our happiness depends upon those among whom we dwell! There are some whose very presence is enough and more than enough to satisfy us; the mere fact of being in their company is a source of continual pleasure. If this is the case with those who are still full of imperfections and faults, how much more in heaven, where every one will be purged of all that offends us in them on earth! Every one of the saints and angels will be not only a congenial but a most delightful companion.

2. But there will be some who will feast our souls with their company and conversation beyond the rest: our friends on earth will be our friends in heaven; we shall recognize each and all. All to whom we have done any kindness for Christ's sake will come to thank us then; above all, any whom we have had the happiness of saving from sin by precept or example will never tire of pouring out upon us the abundance of their gratitude. What more delicious pleasure than this?

3. Yet there will be dearer companions still. The saints of God, our patron saint, our guardian angel, how shall we linger in their sweet society! The saints to whom we have had a special devotion, before all St. Joseph and Our Lady, how surpassing sweet to be with them! Yet all this is only a reflection of the joy we shall derive from beholding the Lamb Who had been slain, our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Pray to dwell now in heart in the company of the saints and angels.**

### 30th Day.—The Memories of Heaven.

*What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? (Ps. cxv. 12.)*

One of the chief sources of our gratitude to God and of our ceaseless joy in heaven will be derived from looking back upon our lives.

1. Even in this world we can catch a glimpse of God's wonderful goodness to us, of all that He has done to save us from sin, to help us on our way to heaven. In heaven we shall see clearly what we now see very darkly, and we shall never cease to admire the unceasing care that God has exercised towards us, making all things work together for our good.

2. What joy, too, we shall feel at the thought of all we have done for God on earth! Each act of self-denial, each raising of the heart to God, each little deed of charity will be remembered then. Christ our Lord will thank us for each, and our hearts will leap with gladness and eternal joy.

3. Even our sins will be indirectly a source of happiness to the saved. There will be the overflowing gratitude to Him Who has washed us from our sins in His own Blood, there will be the joyful contrast between what we might have been and what we are! How eagerly we shall cry: "We are bought with a great price"; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and glory and benediction and power"!

Make acts of gratitude for all God has done and will do for you.

### **31st Day.—How to begin Heaven on Earth.**

*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

(St. Matt. vi. 10)

1. In this vale of tears, even the happiest life is misery compared with the life of heaven. Even the perfect tranquillity and peace enjoyed by the saints of God on earth is confusion and trouble compared with the peace of heaven. Yet we can begin even here a life which contains the germ of Paradise. The essential element of heaven is union with God, and those who are united to God by supernatural charity have in them the seed of heaven's happiness.

2. This supernatural charity does not consist in feeling, or in the absence of suffering, or in brilliant success, or in freedom from temptation. Our life may be one continual cross, one long series of failures as men count failure; we may live in poverty and want, and die unheeded and uncared for; yet such a life may be the beginning of heaven upon earth.

3. In what, then, does supernatural charity consist? Simply in doing what we know to be God's will in the details of our daily life; in having the thought of Him before us as the guiding principle of our actions, of doing all for Him and not for self. One who consistently leads such a life as this cannot fail to be happy in spite of all external miseries, for he carries in himself the principle which constitutes heaven's happiness. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

Pray for this unflinching compliance with the will of  
God in all that you do.



**The Holy Infancy.**  
**SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS.**





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## 1.—The Nativity.

1. Four thousand years had passed since God promised to our first parents that a Redeemer should come to free the world from the curse that had fallen upon it when Adam was disobedient to the divine command. Prophets and kings had desired to see the day when that promise should be fulfilled, but had not seen it. The whole world had long expected the day of redemption. God always is slow in His best gifts. Hence learn to be patient. "He will surely come, He will not tarry."

2. All the world was at peace at the moment when Christ was born. The angry passions of men were hushed as if in compliment to the Prince of peace. He never comes where strife and confusion prevail. If I desire that He should come into my heart to-day, I must resolve to keep under my evil passions, and the self-will that dares to do battle against the will of God.

3. But when the gift came at last, it was a gift worthy of the divine generosity. It was a gift of infinite value, given to all and each of the sons of men. It was a gift in which God gave Himself to be wholly ours. That little Infant in the cradle before Whom I kneel to-day is the omnipotent God, loving me with an immeasurable love; my King, my Lord, my Redeemer, my best Friend, the divine Lover of my soul. Oh, would that I loved Him more!

## 2.—The New-born Child.

In the cradle before us lies the new-born Infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in the manger. Let us contemplate Him for a few moments and see what lessons He teaches us.

1. He teaches us the unspeakable force of divine charity. How was it possible for the Eternal Word, the co-equal Son of God, to leave the bosom of His Father to clothe Himself with the flesh of sinful man? It seems an almost extravagant act of love, one unworthy of the dignity of God. Yet love puts everything aside except the burning desire to promote the welfare of the loved. The Son of God forgot all else in His divine compassion for us. How dearly He must love us! How great should be our confidence in His love!

2. He teaches us never to judge by appearances. If we had been told that God had come to dwell on earth, would not the stable of Bethlehem have been the last place where we should have sought Him? In how many a humble cottage there may still be found saints more dear to God than even those who have a world-wide repute for their holiness and virtue!

3. He teaches us the true dignity of self-abasement. God could not do anything unworthy of Himself when clad in human flesh. It therefore was no disparagement to the divine honor that He should thus infinitely condescend. Nay, it proved that the greatest possible likeness to God is attained by the most complete humiliation of self. How little I have learned to practise this lesson!

### 3.—The Holy Mother.

By the side of the manger where the Infant lies, His Mother is watching. Who is she ?

1. A poor and humble maiden, but nevertheless the Mother of God. The Mother of God ! How can this be ? How can the Eternal, Infinite God have a human mother ? Yet so it is ; Mary has a privilege which raises her immeasurably above the highest of the seraphim. It makes her more perfect in her likeness to God than is possible to any other creature. If, then, we honor the saints and angels, how much more should we honor God's own Mother !

2. Yet Mary has a still greater claim to our homage, a more fruitful source of blessedness even than the divine maternity. Her unswerving obedience to the inspirations of God is declared by Our Lord Himself to be a still higher privilege. "Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." If only we realized the blessedness of unswerving obedience, how different our lot would be !

3. What are Mary's thoughts as she sits watching there ? She has no thought save of God. She is absorbed in Him. The hours pass like minutes, they are a sort of anticipation of Paradise. She sees her God face to face, and though His glory is veiled under the robe of flesh, yet Mary can pierce through it as none else ever could, and can bask in the Divinity which it conceals. O God, help me to realize now Thy presence when Thou art veiled under the sacramental species.

#### 4.—The Foster-father.

At no great distance from the Mother of God stands His holy foster-father St. Joseph, the third person of that earthly trinity. What can we learn from him?

2. He is the true husband of Mary, united to her by a closer bond than any on earth save that which exists between the Mother and the Son. He is, moreover, the true earthly father of Jesus in everything except the fact of carnal generation. He has committed to him the care of God Himself, and of her who is dearer to God than all the world beside. He is, therefore, next to Mary, of all mankind the most privileged and the most exalted. How, then, can we honor him enough?

2. When God gives to any one an office, He gives him the virtues and the qualities which are required for its perfect exercise. What, then, must have been the virtues of St. Joseph! He must have had every virtue, not only in an eminent degree, but in a degree to which none other of the sons of men ever attained. In prudence, justice, humility, charity, he was far above all others. I therefore must ask of him every grace that I need.

3. Above all, St. Joseph was eminent for his unspotted purity. Many theologians assert that he was sanctified in his mother's womb. None save Mary was ever so pure as he. This it was that qualified him for his intimate union with Jesus and Mary. If I desire to be united to them, I must be pure of heart. St. Joseph, obtain for me this grace of purity!

## 5.—The Little Maid.

Tradition asserts that besides Joseph and Mary there was present in the stable at Bethlehem a little maid, who had accompanied them from Nazareth and ministered to Our Lady and the new-born Child.

1. Consider the happiness of this little servant who was privileged to wait upon the holy Mother of God. If to wait upon a queen is considered an honor worthy of maidens of the highest birth, how much more to wait upon the Queen of heaven! Angels must have envied her the task, and longed to be allowed to share in it. I, too, can wait upon Mary by walking in processions in her honor, by kneeling before her statue, by offering her flowers or votive candles, or, if this is out of my power, by declaring to her my loyalty and desire to serve her.

2. Consider this maiden had a still greater privilege. She ministered to God Himself as He lay in the manger. She had the singular honor of being the first after His Mother and St. Joseph to wait upon the King of kings; nay, to carry Him in her arms, and to look upon the face of God; to fold Him to her bosom. How pure and holy she must have been! How pure and holy I ought to be who in holy Communion am brought into still closer contact with the sacred body of Christ!

3. Consider how you would have acted had you been that little servant. Imagine yourself ministering to the Infant Jesus. How unworthy of the task, yet how eager to fulfil it well, to anticipate the wishes of Mary! Do I thus minister to Him in His brethren?



## 6.—The Angels' Song.

On the night of the Nativity a countless multitude of the heavenly host were singing the praises of the new-born King. Let us listen to them.

1. They are singing *Gloria in excelsis Deo*—"Glory to God in the highest!" It is the first song they have sung on earth since the Fall. It is sung on the occasion of the infinite humiliation of the Son of God. Yet they sing, Glory to God in the highest! It must, therefore, be a source of unspeakable glory to God that He has taken the form of a servant, that He has humbled Himself to the very dust. If this is such a source of glory to God, my true glory must consist in humbling myself.

2. They are also singing of peace to men. What sort of peace? Not external peace, for Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword; but true peace, internal peace, that tranquillity of soul that nothing can destroy. This is the boon that Christ gives to all who love Him, in proportion to their love.

3. But peace not for all, only for men of good will. Christ, indeed, brought peace to all, but all did not accept it, only those whose good will and loyal spirit of submission made them ready to acknowledge Him as their Lord, and whom, therefore, the good will of God had predestined to the eternal peace and joy of heaven. God grant that I may be one of these!

## 7.—The Shepherds' Visit.

The first who came to pay their homage to the new-born King were the shepherds who were watching in the fields of Bethlehem, and to whom an angel had announced the birth of Christ the Lord. They received this honor because—

1. They were poor, and therefore were well suited to gather round the King Who came to live in poverty on earth. The Eternal Father chose poverty for His well-beloved Son, and therefore poverty must be better than riches. The poor are to be envied rather than pitied, so long as their poverty is not due to their own sin or folly. How many who have saved their souls in poverty would have lost them if they had been rich! Hence, if you are poor, do not regret your poverty, but rather rejoice in it.

2. They were simple of heart, untainted by the world's deceits. None but good, simple men would have thus come in the darkness of the night, to the stable of Bethlehem, to find their Saviour and their King. God loves simplicity. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome," says Our Lord, and He thereby describes the happy lot of those whose one aim is to do their work with simplicity for God alone. Is this my spirit?

3. They were shepherds. The occupation is one which God seems to love. The man after God's own heart was a shepherd. Our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd. The apostles' dignity lies in the fact that they were shepherds of the flock. Every Christian is a shepherd, in that some sheep or lands are committed to his care. Am I a zealous shepherd of the sheep of Christ?

## 8.—The Circumcision.

1. On the first day of the year we commemorate the first shedding of the Precious Blood for us. Christmas week, as it draws to a close, introduces us to the new-born King in the weakness of the nature that He shared with sinful man. We now learn that He came, not to manifest His power and majesty, but to be made like unto us in all things as far as it was possible for One Who was the Eternal Son of God. We begin to appreciate that He is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

2. To-day He also proclaims that He is come to suffer *for* us. We listen to His first cry of pain, and see the strange spectacle of the first commencement of that Life of which the agony upon the cross was the final consummation. How shall we ever thank Him as we ought? How great a joy we should consider it if we have the privilege of suffering some little pain for Him in return!

3. He also declares to us to-day that He is come to suffer *with* us, to take part in all the miseries of humanity, to learn by His own experience all that we have to endure in this valley of tears. This it is which should console us in all our troubles. Christ not only knows them all, but has in His mercy felt them all Himself in His sacred Humanity.

## 9.—Mary at the Circumcision.

1. The week succeeding the birth of her Son had been to Mary a week of exquisite joy, one long ecstasy of heavenly delight, with no sorrow to mar the brightness of the sunshine of His presence. But on the octave of His Nativity all was changed. She began to realize the fact that Jesus had come to suffer—that He Who was infinitely dearer to her than the whole world was to be the Man of Sorrows—and Mary's joy was changed to bitter sorrow. Thus it is for all those who love God. The times when earth seems unable to contain the greatness of their joy are sure to be followed by sorrow and by pain.

2. It seemed but a trifle which thus changed the complexion of Mary's life. The pain that Jesus had to suffer had but a passing smart. Why should she thus grieve over it? It was because it betokened the indignities that He would have to suffer, the character of a victim for sin that He had taken upon Himself. Often a mere trifle destroys the brightness of our life. God uses matters seemingly trivial to teach us our weakness.

3. Yet Mary would not have had it otherwise. She knew it was the will of God, and that was enough for her. Would that I could learn this lesson more perfectly! Then nothing would destroy my peace, as nothing destroyed Mary's.

## 10.—The Meaning of the Circumcision.

1. It seems strange that the spotless Lamb of God should have been subjected to a rite which was the occasion on which Jewish boys were freed from original sin. Was it not derogatory to Jesus, and calculated to produce the false impression that He was not the Son of God, born of a virgin-mother, but a sinful son of Adam, like those around? Sometimes it is not only lawful, but a duty, to do what is calculated to mislead others, when God enjoins it or some higher motive exists for it.

2. What was this higher motive in the case of the circumcision of Jesus? It was that He might become like us in all things, sin only excepted; that He might be made sin for us, *i.e.*, might bear all the consequences of sin, and the suffering that is the result of sin. O merciful Saviour! May my heart be ever full of gratitude to Thee for this Thy divine condescension!

3. Our Lord was circumcised also because He came to fulfil all the Jewish law, with all its rites and ceremonies. He exalted it by His obedience and exact accomplishment of all its details. So I ought to love and obey every enactment of the Church, every ceremony and every detail of her ritual and discipline.

## II.—The Humility of the Circumcision.

1. One of the most difficult things in the world is to submit to anything that lowers us in the opinion of men and tends to give them a false impression respecting us. Our self-love revolts against the wrongful suspicion, and nature is eager to prove its injustice. Our Lord in the circumcision submitted to a rite which seemed to imply that He was born in sin, in order to teach us, at the very opening of His life, a willingness to be misunderstood and judged guilty of faults we have never committed, and to be credited with natural disadvantages which we do not really possess.

2. We cannot all aim as high as this, or at least we have not yet reached this love of being wrongly judged and despised without cause. But at least we can learn to recognize how utterly opposed to the spirit of Christ is any attempt to make ourselves out better than we are, and to try and lead others to attribute to us virtues or advantages that are not ours, whether it be generosity, or piety, or learning, or riches, or high birth, or wide influence, or a distinguished position in the world.

3. If we want to test our humility, we cannot have a safer touchstone than this willingness to be underrated or disesteemed without any fault of our own. Happy those who can rejoice to suffer shame without giving cause for it! Am I one of these?

## 12.—The Name of Jesus.

1. At the circumcision, Jewish children received their name as other children do at their baptism. Mary's little Son received the name of Jesus or Deliverer, because He was to deliver men from the slavery of sin. This was His appointed office by the divine command: to put an end to the slavery in which men were held by the devil. He was sent to deliver me from the bondage under which I have long labored, the bondage to the opinion of men, the bondage to ill-temper, the bondage to passion, the bondage to selfishness, the bondage to self-will, the bondage to riches or comforts. O Jesus, Deliverer of those in bondage, by Thy sacred circumcision deliver me !

2. Jesus is also our Deliverer from the terrible consequences of sin. Our sins were remitted by the shedding of His Precious Blood. Without the shedding of blood, says St. Paul, there is no remission. What reason I have to dread the consequences due to my sins! Yet Jesus can and will deliver me from them, if I love Him as I ought.

3. Jesus also is the Deliverer of all creation from the curse which came upon the whole earth at the Fall. He has sanctified it by the drops of His Precious Blood that fell upon it. Henceforward it became a new earth, and one day He will cleanse it from all its impurities, and renew it to the heavenly beauty, and make it worthy to be the home of His elect.

### 13.—The Epiphany.

1. The Sun of justice that rose on Christmas morn did not shine on the Jews only. The light that shone upon the rejoicing earth was a light that was to enlighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of the people of Israel. The feast of the Epiphany was the declaration of the world-wide dominion of the new-born King. It proclaimed that the kingdoms of this world were to be the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. Rejoice with the Infant King in His universal sovereignty, and pray that His kingdom may speedily be acknowledged by all His subjects.

2. Those who came to visit Jesus on the Epiphany were three kings. They came as the representatives of all earthly monarchies. They came to do homage and to adore the universal King of the whole earth. What a shadow of a shade is all temporal dominion compared with the dominion of Jesus! What unlimited homage we all owe Him! How we should rejoice to acknowledge Him our King and Lord by our loyal obedience to Him!

3. This festival is especially the festival of converts. Our ancestors were once pagans until the Vicar of Christ sent to our beloved country the apostle who proclaimed to us the faith of Christ. This faith in many lands has faded now, and mockery sits on Juda's throne. Alas, to think that those who had the inheritance of the faith have lost it! How can I ever be grateful enough for the light that shines on me!



#### 14.—The Magi.

1. The three kings who came to do honor to Jesus on the feast of the Epiphany are also called the three Magi, or three Wise Men. They were the rulers of an eastern tribe at some distance from Bethlehem. Like Abraham, they left home and country at God's command. If Abraham thus deserved to be called the Friend of God and Father of the faithful, so these Wise Men were not only the subjects but also the friends of Christ, and the spiritual fathers of all faithful Catholics. We are their spiritual offspring; the innumerable company of Christians in heaven will all have to thank them for having led the way to Jesus.

2. What led them to this long and apparently aimless journey? In their tribe there had long existed a tradition that one day or other a star would appear which the princes of the tribe were to follow, and following it, to find the King of heaven incarnate upon earth. How many generations had looked and longed for the promised sign! Yet it came at last. God always grants sooner or later the desires of those who long after Him.

3. When the star appeared, the Magi lost no time in setting out to follow it. Prompt obedience was their watchword; prompt obedience brought them to Jesus. Prompt obedience made them the earliest converts and the earnest of God's saints. Prompt obedience to God's holy will is the secret of all sanctity.

## 15.—Their Journey.

1. The journey of the Magi from their own country to Palestine, just because a star appeared in a certain quarter of the heavens, was very like a fool's errand. Was a mere floating tradition a sufficient ground for undertaking a long and costly journey? Were not their duties at home of more importance, and had they not a greater claim than this strange apparition which tempted them away? What is folly with man is often wisdom with God. How often have similar arguments been used to deter Protestants from making their submission to the Church, and to dissuade Catholics from consecrating themselves to God! Perhaps I may sometimes have followed the dictates of mere worldly wisdom, neglecting supernatural grace.

2. The star led the Magi on till they arrived at Jerusalem, and then it disappeared. In the bustle of the city no star. In the palace of Herod no star. The busy hum of the crowd seems to be a hindrance to God's holy inspirations.

3. Did the Magi, under these circumstances, accept the situation and devote their time to the sights and wonders of the Holy City? No, nothing would satisfy them except the fulfilment of their mission. What a lesson to us who are so easily diverted by worldly things from seeking after God!

## 16.—The Magi's Stay at Jerusalem.

1. When the star disappeared, the Magi were not disconcerted. If God saw fit to withdraw His direct and extraordinary supernatural guidance, they must fall back on the ordinary means. So they sought for information from those on the spot as to the birthplace of the King of the Jews. Sometimes God leads us by His holy inspirations, sometimes He leaves us to discover His will by natural means. We cannot expect to live always in the blaze of supernatural light showing us the way.

2. When Herod heard of the arrival of these distinguished strangers, and of their inquiries after a new-born King, he was troubled. The tyrant dreaded lest he should be superseded. It is one of the miseries of pride that it lives in continual dread of being set aside and humbled. Humility is never troubled, because it always loves the lowest place and rejoices in its own discomfiture.

3. The priests, when consulted, declared with one voice that Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of the King of the Jews. Yet they manifested no desire to follow the Magi thither. Their knowledge of the truth created in them no wish to carry it into practice. They could teach others, but they did not themselves act on the lessons they taught. How often have I done the same ! I preach so well : I practise so ill.

## 17.—Their Arrival at Bethlehem.

1. When the Wise Men had obtained the information they needed, they wasted no further time at Jerusalem, but turned their steps towards the village of Bethlehem. Their faith was being very sorely tried. The star had disappeared, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, instead of sharing their eagerness to find the new-born King, seemed to be either indifferent or positively hostile to the idea of His presence in their midst. So Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lies waiting in the tabernacle for a visit from those whom He loves. They have no longing after Him, no desire for His company. Only a few faithful souls go to pay their court to Him. Am I one of them?

2. Scarce had they quitted the city when the star appeared again to their joyful eyes. There it is; there is no mistaking it. God has not deserted us. He is still guiding us, and we shall find Him Whom we seek. No wonder that they rejoiced with great joy. So to those who have persevered amid doubt and darkness God soon restores the light of His presence. Courage, faint heart, the star will soon re-appear.

3. At length the star, instead of moving above them in the heavens, came nearer to earth, and settled on the humble dwelling-place where Jesus and His Mother abode. What! the King of the Jews in that poverty-stricken shed? Yes, so it is; Christ scorns the gilded palace, and loves the humble hut. There He is at home; thither He invites His friends to come and see how He dwells with the poor and humble of heart.

## 18.—The Finding of Christ.

1. It must have been rather a surprise to the Magi to find the new-born King so poorly housed and humbly clad. Their Eastern ideas of magnificence must have had rather a shock from the absence of all visible splendor from the cradle of the King of kings. Yet their faith never wavered. God was their teacher, and they had learned from Him the difficult lesson of not judging by outward appearances and the impressions of sense.

2. With beating hearts they knock at the door, and Joseph opens to them. Within they find Him Whom they were seeking, in the arms of Mary His Mother. That humble dwelling is full of a celestial light. Sweet songs of angel minstrelsy ring in their ears. Their hearts are full of an unspeakable joy and assurance that before them they have the King of the Jews, nay, the Lord of heaven and earth, their Saviour and their God.

3. The first impulse of their hearts is to fall prostrate before that little Child. They fell down and adored Him. What a happiness it was to them to make their submission to Him; to profess their loyalty; to declare that they belonged to Him body and soul for time and for eternity! O Jesus, to Thee, and to Thee only, I belong. Make me Thy faithful servant now and forever.

## 19.—Their Gifts : (1) Gold.

1. Why did the Magi offer gold to the Babe in Mary's arms? It was in recognition of Him as their King. It was the tribute by which they declared themselves His vassals, professed their loyal submission to His sway. This is the very foundation of all supernatural virtue, not only to acknowledge Christ as our King, but to pay Him the homage which is His due as the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

2. The Magi also by their offering of gold gave to Him the most precious gift they had to give. They were the first Christian almsgivers, and their almsgiving was a pattern to all who should follow them. They gave liberally; they gave royally; they gave gifts which cost them something. Is this the character of my almsgiving, or do I give sparingly and grudgingly? I must not forget that Christ sees and remembers not only the amount of the gifts I give to Him, but the spirit in which they are given.

3. The gold of the Magi also signifies the virtue of charity, without which we can do nothing to please God. Charity is the gold fire-tried which He counsels the tepid to buy of Him. It is the virtue which is the standard by which the value of all other virtues is tested. It is the virtue which caused Jesus Christ to come and dwell upon earth. Oh, that I had more self-denying charity to others, more of the gold wherewith heaven is bought!

## 20.—Their Gifts : (2) Frankincense.

1. The offering of frankincense to any one has always been regarded by the common consent of mankind as an acknowledgment of inherent Deity. When the Christians were commanded to throw a grain of incense on the altar of Jupiter or Minerva, it was in acknowledgment of their divinity. The Magi, then, by this offering to Christ of incense, were the first Gentile witnesses to His Divinity. They made thereby an implicit act of faith in His Godhead, and proved the honor they paid Him to be that highest honor that belongs to God alone.

2. Frankincense is, moreover, a symbol of all that is sweetest and most fragrant. What so sweet to Jesus as the complete offering of ourselves to Him implied in the homage paid to Him as God! Jesus, my God, my all, I offer Thee my heart, my soul, my self!

3. Frankincense is the material symbol under which prayer is indicated in Holy Scripture. The angel offers in the Apocalypse the prayers of the saints in a golden censer, and there comes up continually from earth the cloud of prayers as a cloud of incense. Among them my prayers arise. Are they such as will be fragrant and pleasing to God?

## 21.—Their Gifts : (3) Myrrh.

1. Myrrh is the herb used most largely for embalming. It has the power to prevent corruption and preserve the purity and freshness of the body which is in contact with it. It was offered to Our Lord as a testimony not only of the perfect and unsullied purity of those to whom He is united by the bonds of charity, but also in evidence of the power of His sacred body to save from corruption those who partake of it in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

2. Thus myrrh was offered to Our Lord as possessing a true human body, as truly Man as well as truly God. We must never lose sight of this fact of Christ's Humanity, that He has all the sympathy and interest in all that concerns us that we have perhaps received from some kind earthly friend, all His desire to help us, all His wisdom, prudence, patience, appreciation of our griefs and sorrows ; and all this to a degree compared with which our best friend on earth does not deserve the name. Why do I not have recourse to Him more ?

3. Myrrh is also the symbol of mortification. If our bodies are to be pure, we must mortify our evil desires and give up what is very attractive to our lower nature. If we desire great purity of heart, we must mortify ourselves in things lawful, and deny ourselves even what we might enjoy without sin. Do I do this ?



## 22.—Their Return Home.

1. Before the Magi left Jerusalem for Bethlehem, Herod had enjoined upon them that they should return and tell him where the new-born King of the Jews was to be found, declaring that he, too, desired to come and adore Him. Hypocrite and treacherous liar that he was, his real object was to destroy his supposed rival. He made no scruple of planning the murder of one who might possibly supplant him. Those who love worldly honor are always unscrupulous. It has the power of blinding the eyes and deadening the conscience, and making men esteem evil good and good evil.

2. The Magi seem to have been deceived by Herod's fair words, and to have promised to return with the information he desired. Good men are always unsuspecting of evil. We all judge others by ourselves. If you want to know your own character, ask yourself whether your judgment of others is a charitable or uncharitable one.

3. When the Magi had finished their visit to Bethlehem, they prepared to return to Herod. But an angel warned them to avoid the city where he dwelt, and to go back to their own country by some other way. We need never fear lest our charitable judgments should do harm. God will provide against this; it is our harsh and severe judgments which are productive of so much evil to ourselves and others.

### 23.—Herod's Vengeance.

1. When Herod found that the Magi did not return with the information respecting the King Whom they were seeking, he became uneasy. The plan he had cunningly devised had come to naught; the rival Monarch seemed likely to escape his hands. One day perhaps he or his children would be dethroned by Him. O empty fears! That little Child seeks no worldly honor; He will not interfere with any earthly monarch. The secret fear that destroys the peace of unscrupulous men is often as empty as Herod's. The terrors they suffer are the just rewards of their evil deeds. How often I have been anxious and troubled because my pride could not brook being humbled!

2. But Herod was utterly unscrupulous as well as ambitious. There was one way in which he could secure his end. By putting to death all the young children in the country round Bethlehem, he would compass the death of this royal Child Who threatened his safety. Pride and ambition not only blind men, but make them utterly indifferent to the sufferings of others and the laws of right and wrong. I, too, have often recklessly made others suffer to gratify myself and carry out my own selfish ends.

3. When Herod came to die, how awful must have been the terrors of his guilty conscience! The blood of those children slaughtered at his command had long cried out to Heaven for vengeance. Each one of them added to his remorse and eternal misery in hell. If evil men could foresee the consequences to themselves of the sins they commit, they would dread sin, even venial sin, far more than any earthly misery they could suffer.

## 24.—The Angel's Warning.

One night when Joseph was peacefully sleeping at Bethlehem, an angel's voice aroused him from his slumbers, and he saw before him one of the messengers of the Most High, who said: "Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and fly into the land of Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." Hence observe:

1. That God's ways are so different from ours. We should have expected that He would exert His divine power in behalf of His only-begotten Son, and that the soldiers of Herod would be struck with blindness on the road, or would somehow fail to discover where Jesus was, or perhaps would come and fall prostrate at the feet of the new-born King. How different the course enjoined by the angel! Apparently so clumsy a way of saving Jesus from His enemies! Yet such are God's ways—clumsy in the eyes of men. What strange presumption it is that I should criticise the divine arrangements as I sometimes do!

2. That the conditions of safety seemed so unnecessarily hard. Why to Egypt—a pagan land, the very name of which was a synonym for bondage and misery? Was this the only way to preserve the life of the Son of God? To all this one answer: It was God's will, and that was enough.

3. But after all it was but a vision of the night, perhaps a dream or a mere subjective fancy. Could anything so wild and imprudent come from God? To all this one answer: I know the message came from God, and I cannot and will not evade the divine command.

## 25.—Joseph's Obedience.

1. No such questioning as we have supposed in our last meditation ever occurred to St. Joseph's mind. His duty, his pleasure, was to hear and to obey. Not a moment did he lose. He roused his virgin-spouse and told her what they had to do, and ere morning dawned, they had left Bethlehem far behind.

2. Yet there was no hurry or bustle or undue haste in the preparation they made; no rushing to and fro, no impatience, not a movement but such as was calm and deliberate, modest and dignified. It is one of the marks of sanctity to have thus under control every look and every action. How can I stand this test? When time presses, or my indignation is aroused, or my patience tried, am I gentle and peaceful and calm?

3. Observe, moreover, how there is not a single word of complaint or of grumbling, no expression of annoyance or word of mutual commiseration. Each seeks to lighten the work of the other. How cheerful both Mary and Joseph are! Almost joyous. It is a trial; yes, but more for the sake of the Divine Child than for their own. Even the thought of what Jesus may have to suffer never destroys their peace. O happy Joseph! O blessed Mary! make me more like you.

## 26.—The Perils of the Way.

1. Out into the darkness of the night went Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Can these homeless wanderers really be the three whose value in the eyes of Heaven made all the rest of the world insignificant as a grain of sand compared with a continent? Yes, this is God's way of treating those whom He loves best. Herod, in his luxurious palace, is feasting and revelling in luxury and ease: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are outcasts from their home, shivering in the cold and stormy night. How foolish, then, to desire ease and comfort, or to regret the hardships and disagreeables that befall me!

2. Whither were they going? To Egypt, along an unknown road to a distant and idolatrous country; not knowing the way, not knowing how long they should find subsistence from day to day. What was the trial of Abraham compared with this? He went forth with an escort of servants and camels, and with tents and a store of good things for the way; the Divine Son of God and His parents, empty-handed and alone. Compassionate the Holy Family in their sufferings by the way.

3. What were those sufferings? Often they knew not where to lay their heads, and had to sleep under the starry sky. Often they had to beg their bread. Sometimes they were in danger from the rough banditti who infested the road. Sometimes the wild beasts howled around them. This is a model of the life of the Christian: sometimes deprived of all spiritual sustenance and of all human consolation; sometimes fiercely attacked by men, sometimes by evil passions and the rage of Satan; yet always safe under the watchful care of God.

## 27.—The Arrival in Egypt.

1. At length they reached the spot that God designed for their sojourn, in a land full of idols and idolaters. What uncongenial surroundings for the Holy Family, alone in the midst of those who worshipped a false god! So many a Catholic has to dwell in a most uncongenial atmosphere—perhaps among heretics, or bad Catholics, or those whose words and looks and actions continually jar and cause pain. Patience! Jesus and Mary know by experience what such have here to suffer.

2. When the Holy Family arrived in Egypt, in the town where they came to dwell, all the idols in the temples fell prostrate to the ground, and were shattered to pieces. Thus when Christ comes to dwell within the soul, all that opposes itself to God is destroyed by His sacred presence. If Jesus dwells with us, we shall no longer allow pride, envy, bitterness, self-will, discontent, to reign in our hearts.

3. The presence of the Holy Family in Egypt hallowed the spot where they sojourned. In early Christian times it was covered with the cells of the monks and hermits. Thus Jesus always leaves a blessing behind Him. When He comes to me in holy Communion, if only I put no obstacle in the way, my soul will flourish with virtues and good works as the effect of His presence.

## 28.—The Long Waiting.

1. For seven long years the Holy Family remained in the land of Egypt. From day to day they knew not whether they were to spend all their days in banishment, far from the dear land of Israel, or to return thither it might be on the morrow ; yet no shade of impatience ever marred the perfection of their peace and resignation to the will of God. How different from myself, who am so anxious and troubled about the future !

2. During all this time St. Joseph supported his holy spouse and the infant Jesus by working at his trade of a carpenter. They often felt the pinch of poverty, but never wanted for bread. God forsakes not His own, though He sometimes tries them to the very edge of their powers of endurance. He will not forsake me if I put my trust in Him.

3. How little the people of Egypt knew Who it was that dwelt for these long years amongst them ! If they had known it, they would eagerly have cast aside their idols, and thrown themselves at the feet of the King of heaven and earth. So if those outside the Catholic Church knew that on every altar God Himself dwells in the Blessed Sacrament, how they would come in crowds to make their humble submission to Him ! Hence teach a great charity to those outside the Church of Christ. It is often ignorance, not malice, that stands in the way of their conversion.

## 29.—The Return Home.

1. At length, when it seemed as if God had almost forgotten His well-beloved Son, the summons came to return to the land of Israel. An angel appeared to Joseph with the welcome news that those who had sought the life of Jesus were dead, and that therefore they might go back in safety. Those who are willing to wait are sure to obtain their desires. It is impatience and the restless desire for immediate relief that leads to so many disappointments. In the things of God, as in all else, it is those who wait who win.

2. How full of joy were the hearts of Joseph and Mary as they neared once more their native land! Like all the saints, they had an intense love for their country and their people and their home. Holy indifference does not mean that we have no natural affections for kindred and for fatherland, but that those affections are entirely subordinate to the will of God.

3. If the people of Egypt knew not that their God was dwelling among them, they knew that they had amongst them those who were the special friends of God. Mary and Joseph had endeared themselves to all around by their gentleness, charity, patience, courtesy, humility, and thoughtful kindness to all. To them how terrible a grief was the departure of the Holy Family! Do I endear myself to those among whom I live?



### 30.—The Arrival in Palestine.

1. When Joseph arrived with Mary and her Divine Son in their own land, his first thought was to turn to Bethlehem, and to dwell in peace where he had dwelt so peaceably before. But to his sorrow he learned that the son of the impious Herod was ruling in his father's place. He was not going to expose to any risk the treasure committed to him, and at once he determined to turn his steps elsewhere. Notice his prudence, and beware of running any risk with the treasures of grace God has committed to you. One serious sin will lose them all.

2. Whither should he go? It was all one to St. Joseph, as long as he went whither God sent him. He was quite as ready to go to Nazareth as anywhere else, if God directed his steps thither. This should be my disposition, to be ready to go anywhere, and live in any place, where God may send me.

3. How did St. Joseph decide where he was to dwell? By prayer and by good counsel. He asked of God to turn his steps whither He willed, and he also did not neglect the rules of human prudence. This is St. Ignatius' advice: (1) Act with prudence, but never forget to consult God. (2) While you trust all to God, do not lose sight of the importance of using natural means.

**St. Joseph.**  
**SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR MARCH.**

i



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## **1st Day.—The Foreshadowing of St. Joseph.**

1. As the Church of Christ is prefigured in the rites and ceremonies of the Old Law, so the chief personages who centre round Our Lord in the redemption of the world are foreshadowed in the Old Testament. We trace the outlines of Our Lady's graces in Esther, Jahel, Bethsabée, Judith. So, too, St. Joseph's place in the new dispensation is anticipated in the place of the patriarch Joseph at the court of Pharaoh. Thus it is that God in His love for His chosen ones paves the way for them centuries before. From the beginning He has prepared their work, and the throne they are to earn in heaven by their labors and sufferings for Him.

2. In the life of the patriarch Joseph there was throughout a correspondence to the life of the foster-father of Jesus Christ. The troubles and persecutions of his early life; his long time of servitude and obscurity; his wondrous purity, his time of patient expectation; his glorious exaltation; his omnipotence with the king; his power to save all who came to him—all these were repeated, or rather were fulfilled, in St. Joseph. Reflect on each of these, and consider how St. Joseph is a model to us.

3. We read of the patriarch that the king of Egypt made him lord of his house. So God made St. Joseph lord of that earthly tabernacle of flesh in which He dwelt on earth. Joseph ruled Our Lord in His sacred humanity. He made him lord, too, of another house in which He sojourned, of the sacred house that Wisdom built for Himself in the form of His holy Mother. If St. Joseph was thus lord of Jesus and Mary, what may we not expect from Him?

## **[2d Day.—St. Joseph's Parentage and Birth.**

1. Though St. Joseph lived in poverty and contempt, he came of a noble ancestry. The blood of kings and saints ran in his veins, and what is more, he inherited from them the virtues of each, but in a far higher degree than that which their original possessor had enjoyed. How much that is good in me is an inheritance from my parents and forefathers! Yet how ill I have employed the virtues I received from them! Instead of being better than they, like St. Joseph, I am the degenerate child of parents far better than myself.

2. St. Joseph, as the greatest of all the saints next to Our Lady, had all the privileges of other saints. Hence we may piously believe that, like St. John, he was cleansed from sin in his mother's womb. He was to be Mary's spouse, he was to occupy the first and foremost place in the family of Jesus, he was hereafter to be the Patron of the whole Church: it was therefore fitting that he should be endowed with this initial privilege of being from his birth a child of God, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Thank God for this privilege bestowed on him!

3. St. Joseph was the connecting link between the Old and the New Dispensation, the first dawn that announces the coming day. In his youth he belonged to the Old Law, in his later life to the New. As the dawn brightens into the glorious day, so St. Joseph's life, beautiful from the first, advanced in splendor continually. Is this the history of my life? Have I made steady progress in the love of God?

### 3d Day.—St. Joseph's Childhood and Youth.

1. The names of the servants of God often indicate some leading feature in their work or in their character. When God Himself gives the name this is always the case. Joseph signifies adding or increasing, and was a forecast of his continuous increase, not only in grace and in favor with God, but also in glory and repute with men as long as the world shall last. Rejoice in the growing devotion to St. Joseph, and ask yourself whether your devotion to him grows.

2. St. Joseph is said to have had a boyhood and youth of suffering, and to have been persecuted and ill-treated by his brethren. We should expect it to be so, since this was the lot of the patriarch of Genesis; and moreover, one who has such an eminent position in the Church on earth and such exceeding glory in heaven must have been conformed to our blessed Lord in having a career of suffering. St. Joseph's character as known to us in Holy Scripture is eminently one purified by having had much to undergo. Such patience, gentleness, thoughtful charity, cannot be learned except at a heavy price.

3. Joseph's trade was that of a carpenter. The thought of the great Patron of the Universal Church, the husband of Mary, having been a handicraftsman, ought to give us a great respect for manual labor. The idea that there is in it anything unsuitable to our dignity is a vulgar, unchristian, heathen notion. All the saints had a love for manual labor. How much better such a life than that of self-satisfied ease and luxury! Thank God if you have to labor.



#### 4th Day.—St. Joseph's Betrothal.

1. When our blessed Lady arrived at a marriageable age, the chief priest summoned all the unmarried men of the house of David, that from them a husband might be chosen for her. There is a tradition that to each of them a rod was delivered, and the high-priest, speaking under divine inspiration, declared that God would choose a spouse for Mary in the same way that Aaron was chosen to be high-priest in the Old Law. "Whomsoever of these I shall choose, his rod shall blossom" (Num. xvii. 5). On the morrow the rod of Joseph had budded and blossomed. He was thus declared by God to be the worthy spouse of His holy Mother.

2. But Joseph had promised to God to remain ever a virgin.\* How could he then consent to marriage? He knew by divine revelation that Mary had made a similar vow, and Mary knew the same of him. O happy, O ideal union! where the sublime gift of virginity was united to the mutual love and dependence of husband on wife and wife on husband.

3. But thus it is that God provides for His elect. He plans for them in a way that utterly sets at naught the prudence of the world. He never disappoints those who leave themselves in His hands, but exercises a divine ingenuity in fulfilling all the desires of their hearts in most unexpected ways, in return for their submission and obedience to His holy will. Thus it is that those who do God's will always do their own will, for their will is His, and His will is theirs.

\* St. Thomas in *Quest. Sent.* ii. 1.

## 5th Day.—St. Joseph's Espousal.

1. Never were husband and wife so eminently suited to each other as Joseph and Mary. Never was there a union that so exactly symbolized the union between Christ and the Church. Happy indeed are those who meet with a congenial spouse! Happier still are those who are content to live in a state of virginity, and in the religious life to choose Jesus Christ Himself for their divine Spouse. They it is who most nearly approach to the life of Joseph with Mary.

2. St. Joseph and Our Lady lived in perpetual chastity, and their union was a closer one than that of any other husband and wife in the whole world. Their ideas, opinions, hopes, wishes, likes, and dislikes were all the same; Joseph was Mary's strong support, Mary loved to depend on Joseph. None was ever so obedient, gentle, loving, and sympathizing a wife as Mary. None was ever such a thoughtful, kind, prudent, faithful husband as Joseph.

3. Of what age was St. Joseph at the time of his marriage? Not an old man, for this would have been unseemly; nor very young, for he would not have been a suitable protector for Mary; but about the prime of life. It is true that from the fifth century onwards, he is represented as a bearded old man, but this is partly to represent the dignity of his character, partly as a portrait of his later years. Joseph was always far advanced in wisdom, counsel, prudence, and the love of God. Would that I were more like him!

## 6th Day.—The Annunciation.

1. Our Lady's peaceful life at Nazareth with her chaste and holy spouse had continued for some weeks or months when that wondrous message came to her that she was to be the Mother of God. The Son of God became Incarnate in her holy womb! How it must have transformed her whole life to know that her God dwelt within her! She was no longer Joseph's spouse before all else; he had to give place to One holier than he, to One Who was not mere man, but God! Now she was before all and above all the sacred house in which the Eternal Wisdom of God dwelt under a veil of flesh!

2. Did Joseph perceive any change in her? Yes; he was conscious of a dignity, of a grace, of a divinity encircling Mary, which with all her holiness had not been there before. Mary's sanctity was transformed. She herself, who before had been like a beautiful crystal, was now like a crystal through which some brilliant light continually darted its rays of splendor. So ought we to be when we receive holy Communion. What a change it should make in us! How in our conversation the recent presence of our God within us should show its divine effects in us!

3. Why did not Mary tell Joseph? She could not. She who always acted under divine inspiration was inspired to conceal the divine secret. How could she, with her humility, reveal this unexampled privilege? She knew all that her silence would bring on her, but until God urged her to speak she would be silent. Are we similarly guided by God in all things, and are we anxious to conceal what exalts us in the eyes of others?

## 7th Day.— The Visitation.

1. The visit of Mary to her cousin St. Elizabeth took place a short time after the Annunciation. It had been suggested to her by the angel's message, telling her that Elizabeth was to bear a son. St. Joseph knew nothing of this, yet he raised no objection to the journey. He had already conceived such a reverence for his spotless spouse that it was enough for him that she entertained a wish. He knew that she never asked on impulse, or without a due cause; and so when Mary asked his leave to visit her cousin, he at once consented. So we should consult, as far as possible, the wishes of others, seeking to conform our will to others in the spirit of charity.

2. St. Joseph would not allow his young wife to take the journey alone. He went with her as her escort. What a happiness for him to wait upon her! How tenderly he watches over her! How thoughtfully he sees to all her wants! Men often idealize those they love, but there was no need to idealize Mary. She was an ideal in herself. And when he approached her, Joseph somehow felt that he was drawing near to God, and that God dwelt in her in some other way than by His graces and gifts.

3. Arrived at their journey's end, St. Joseph in his humility saw to their material needs, and did not hear the words of Elizabeth saluting Mary as Mother of God, and announcing the joy of her unborn babe at His presence. St. Joseph was ignorant and remained in ignorance of the mystery of the Incarnation. He had to *wait*; that was to be the law of his life, as it is of the lives of all who are very dear to God.

### **8th Day.—St. Joseph's First Sorrow.**

1. St. Joseph's life had been from the beginning one of many trials and much suffering, but all were mere trifles compared with the dark cloud of sorrow that fell upon him after Mary returned from the house of Elizabeth. He could not help seeing that she was about to become a mother. What could this mean? How could it be explained consistently with her spotless purity? St. Joseph ventured not to pass any judgment. Here he is our model, slow in believing that which had the appearance of evil, anxious to find a favorable explanation.

2. What explanation could he find? That she had sinned was a thought not only abhorrent to him, but utterly impossible in view of Mary's transparent purity and exalted virtue. Away with so horrible a thought! Could the human paternity have been without any fault on her part? Equally impossible; God would have protected His hand-maid. Was her condition a miracle wrought by God? Such a miracle was without example since the world began. Joseph was utterly perplexed. All was dark and black; he could only wait and pray. O wise resolve!

3. But it was necessary to take action. In no case could he keep her with him. She must be sent back to her friends. How could he live without her? How could he expose her to disgrace? To put her to open shame was out of the question; he must send her away privately. This was his duty and he would do it. It would break his heart to lose her, but he must do his duty without thought of self. Here, too, St. Joseph is a model to us.

## 9th Day.—St. Joseph's First Joy.

1. Joseph had in his sad perplexity for some time prayed and thought, and thought and prayed again. Externally his conduct gave no sign of the anguish of his soul. But all the same Mary must have been conscious of the thoughts that were passing in her dear spouse's mind, and though God had given her no leave to speak, she prayed continually that He would make known to Joseph what had taken place in her. God could not refuse to listen to His handmaid's prayer.

2. One night as Joseph slept an angel appeared. "Fear not," he said, "to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in Mary's womb is of the Holy Ghost." That Child is divine, nay, is Himself God. Thou art appointed to be His guardian and protector. Thou shalt call His name Jesus; thou shalt be the foster-father of thy God, as thou art the true husband of His mother. Thus it is that God intervenes to dispel the fears of His servants who watch and pray, who patiently abide God's time, and only seek His will.

3. What intense joy and lightness of heart fill the soul of Joseph at the angel's words! His bewildered perplexity was changed to peace and gladness. He was to be the consort of the Mother of God; nay, more, he was to have the rights of a father over the Son of God; he was to have the unspeakable privilege of dwelling with God Incarnate! O happy Joseph! Thy obedience and patience received indeed a rich reward.

## 10th Day.—St. Joseph's Second Sorrow.

1. When St. Joseph started from his cottage at Nazareth, to repair to Bethlehem according to the emperor's command, he had every reason to expect that he would be well received. His early youth had been spent there, and he must have been known to many of the inhabitants. But when he arrived there, a sad surprise awaited him. No room in the caravansary or guest-house. No room in any of the cottages where he applied for admission. Everywhere a refusal. No room for him; no room for his spotless spouse. It is always painful to meet with a cold reception among those who we expect will welcome us.

2. It was not for his own sake that Joseph grieved. He was accustomed to be treated ill. He had learned to welcome it for God's sake. But to witness the distress caused to his holy spouse, ah, this was hard! It is far more painful to witness suffering in those we love than to feel it ourselves. Could Joseph do nothing to find shelter for Mary in her delicate and critical condition? Every resource had failed him; he could only pray and wait.

3. At last a thought occurred to him. He remembered a cave where some animals were kept; small, low, dirty, unfit for human habitation. Here at least she would be safe from the pinching cold, here they could remain in peace. How could he propose it to her? Was this the sort of treatment to be accorded to the Mother of God? Yes, it must be so, and Joseph submitted to the holy will of God.

**11th Day.—St. Joseph's Second Joy.  
The Birth of Jesus.**

1. Though St. Joseph knew that the time of Our Lady's delivery was drawing near, yet the birth of Jesus came upon him as a joyful surprise. He anticipated the lot of his Foster-Son. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." The reward of Joseph's purity, chastity, patience, submission, gentleness, and sorrow, was the visible presence of the Son of God, the privilege of being the first of all the sons of men to behold Him. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God, was literally fulfilled for the first time in the person of St. Joseph.

2. It was but fitting that the coming of Christ Jesus into the world should be surrounded by celestial wonders. A choir of angels sang angelic melodies, and a brightness dazzling beyond the brightness of the sun illumined the cave and centred around the new-born Infant and His Virgin Mother. St. Joseph saw the Holy Child, and the sight was heaven begun. What was all the preceding sorrow compared with the unspeakable joy of that happy moment?

3. Joseph was recalled to earthly things by hearing voices outside the cave, and seeing a group of shepherds coming to adore the new-born King. It was not a dream, then, but a happy reality. God was really come to dwell among men, and was born in that humble cave. What mattered it if it was bare, and poor, and rough? How much happier to be there sitting on the hard ground, poor and despised of men, than to be lolling on perfumed couches in the palace of Herod! Where Jesus is, there is happiness. What are outward things if we enjoy His peace?



**12th Day.—St. Joseph's Third Sorrow.  
The Shedding of Jesus' Blood at His Circumcision.**

1. On the eighth day after the birth of a Jewish boy the ceremony of circumcision took place, according to God's covenant with Abraham. Was this cleansing rite to be performed in the case of the Son of God? Yes; He had come to suffer and to shed His blood for us, and on the very octave of His birth, Mary and Joseph had to recognize that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

2. It was St. Joseph who had to be the minister of the sacred rite. He had to be the reluctant and sorrowful cause of those tears of the Infant Jesus. What was St. Joseph thinking of? We may at least conjecture that he was lamenting over the evil of sin; that he was recognizing in the pain that he was inflicting one of the most terrible consequences of sin; that he was praying to his Son and his God to forgive those sinners for whom He was shedding His precious blood.

3. Hard by, Mary was bathed in tears of anguish. Now for the first time Jesus was enduring the cruel smart which all His life long was to be His lot at the hands of His own creatures. If only she could bear the pain for Him! How the sight of His tears pierced her heart! All this St. Joseph witnessed, and his sorrow at the bitter sufferings of Jesus was intensified by his sorrow at Mary's bitter grief. If Joseph thus sorrowed, how much more should I, who have so constantly by my sins added to the pangs suffered by the Son of God!

**13th Day.—St. Joseph's Third Joy.  
Hearing the Name of Jesus.**

1. Before Our Lord was born, an angel had given instructions to St. Joseph that His name was to be called JESUS. It was St. Joseph, not Our Lady, who was first to pronounce the name of the Son of God. The jurisdiction he thus exercised was a declaration of his authority. When God brought the animals to Adam to be named, He thus declared him their master. So when He gave to Joseph the office of naming the Infant in his arms, He declared him the constituted ruler of his God. O wondrous privilege! What must have been the sanctity of one to whom such an office was assigned!

2. The name St. Joseph gave to his Infant Son was Jesus, the Saviour—not Emmanuel, or Christ. Christ is the official name of the Son of God in virtue of His human nature; He was anointed as Man with the Holy Spirit. Emmanuel, or God with us, proclaims His divinity; but Jesus, or Saviour, declares at the same time His human nature and divine personality. As Our Saviour He must be both God and Man—man to pay the price of our redemption, God that the price may be one that can satisfy the Eternal Father.

3. What must have been the sweetness which filled St. Joseph's heart as he first breathed that sacred name! If to others it was as honey in their mouth, to St. Joseph it was as nectar and ambrosia, containing in itself all possible sweetness. None save the holy Mother felt such joy as St. Joseph in pronouncing the holy name. Yet how little I love it and relish it! How seldom I repeat it, and with what coldness and indifference! My Jesus, mercy! May I love Thee ever more and more!

**14th Day.—St. Joseph's Fourth Sorrow.  
The Prophecy of Simeon.**

1. When the aged Simeon took into his arms the Infant Jesus, and gave thanks to God that he had at length seen the salvation of Israel, we are told that he blessed the little group before him. But it was a strange benediction. The Glory of Israel, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, was to be set for the fall of many of His people. St. Joseph could scarce believe his ears at the unexpected words. Was this to be the result of the Incarnation of the Son of God? We little know the sorrows that God may have in store for us, the sudden blow that may unexpectedly light upon our head.

2. This was not all. Another clause in that strange blessing declared that the spotless Lamb of God should be a sign that should be contradicted. What could there be in Him that should rouse ill-will, or opposition, or contradiction? Had He not come to be the Saviour of mankind? Were not His lips to be full of grace from the first day that He began to speak? St. Joseph accepted with resignation the heart-breaking news.

3. It was not only Jesus who was to suffer. Mary's heart was to be pierced through with a sword. Her life was to be one continual sorrow. She was to suffer with the sufferings of Jesus. The tender, compassionate heart of Joseph was filled with fresh sorrow at the prospect of the anguish that was to overtake his holy spouse. To sorrow with the sorrow of others assuages their grief. It is this which will win for us a share in the joy that St. Joseph has in heaven.

### 15th Day.—St. Joseph's Fourth Joy.

1. As our blessed Lord was consoled during His sacred agony by a vision of the fruits of His Passion, in the happiness of the countless multitude of the redeemed, so St. Joseph was comforted in his sorrow for the coming sufferings of Jesus and Mary by knowing that the reconciliation to God of souls without number would be their recompense. The knowledge of the work that Jesus was to accomplish in enabling millions to arise from their sins filled Joseph's heart with sweetness and delight. It is one of the marks of love to God that we rejoice in the spiritual good of others beyond all else. Can I say that it is my greatest joy to hear of the advancing spiritual welfare of those with whom I am concerned?

2. St. Joseph was himself to have no direct part in the divine work of expiation. Jesus was to accomplish it, and Mary was to have her share, so far as mortal could. Did Joseph rejoice the less because others were to do the work? Not a whit; he desired simply that God's glory and man's good should be advanced. How different am I, who am often jealous of others where I fail, and take little interest in any good work save that with which I am personally concerned!

3. St. Joseph's joy at the fruit of the sufferings of Jesus and Mary quite overpowered his sorrow at the fact of their having to suffer. He estimated things at their true value, and though he grieved at the thought that God and His Mother were to suffer, yet he counted it a privilege for Christ as man to suffer, that as man He might receive that plentiful and overflowing reward that God gives to those who suffer for Him.

**26th Day.—St. Joseph's Fifth Sorrow.  
The Flight into Egypt.**

1. One night, as Joseph slept, a vision came before his eyes. He saw an angel who bade him rise and take the Child Jesus and His Mother and fly into Egypt. Without a moment's delay he rose quickly, called Our Lady, put together what was necessary for the journey, and started ere dawn appeared in the sky. His heart was torn with sorrow, but, like a true son of obedience, he hesitated not for a single moment, but accepted all as coming from God.

2. Long and perilous was the journey, many were the sufferings of the Holy Family. Perils in the desert, perils from the robbers who beset the road, perils from the wild beasts, perils from exposure to the sun by day and to the cold by night. Sorrowful indeed was St. Joseph's heart, as he trudged on day by day leading the ass on which Our Lady rode. Sorrowful not for his own sake, but because of the anxiety he felt for the safety of the precious treasure committed to him. Sorrowful at the thought of all they were suffering, and would suffer during their exile.

3. At last they arrived at the destination God had fixed for them, and here St. Joseph earned a scanty livelihood day by day by his trade as carpenter. How uncongenial was all around! They were among those who knew not the true God, among their old oppressors in Egypt, among idolaters and pagans. No murmur ever escaped St. Joseph's lips; he was willing to wait in Egypt as long as God pleased. Do I submit with blind obedience to all that God commands through my superior or the arrangement of His providence, without murmuring or complaining?

**17th Day.—St. Joseph's Fifth Joy.**  
**Seeing the Idols of Egypt Fall to the Ground.**

1. When the Holy Family had crossed the desert and arrived at the place of their abode in Egypt, tradition records a miracle. The idols in the temples are said to have fallen prostrate on the very night of their arrival. The news filled Joseph's heart with joy. The one thought of Joseph's life was to further the influence of Jesus. His one joy was to see Jesus beat down His enemies and gather to Him men of good will.

2. This joy of St. Joseph in the power of the Son of God was a recompense for the sorrow he felt at His apparent helplessness when he was commanded to carry Him down to Egypt. Then it seemed as if He were utterly feeble against His enemies, but now the omnipotence of His divinity manifests itself by unmistakable signs. So it is with those who trust in God under difficult circumstances. It seems as if He were unable or unwilling to save them, but He will reward their patient confidence by some glorious surprise they had not even ventured to hope for.

3. Christ's task is always to destroy idols. In my heart there are many idols: sloth, sensuality, selfishness, impatience, anger, neglect of religious duties, unkindness to others, self-love, disobedience, and, worst of all, pride. If Jesus is to dwell with me these idols must be overthrown, and pride above all. It is a difficult task, so long have they held sway there. O good St. Joseph, bring with thee Jesus and His love, and cast down for me these hateful intruders that Jesus hates.

**18th Day.—St. Joseph's Sixth Sorrow.  
Finding that Archelaus reigned in Judæa.**

1. When the appointed time was come, St. Joseph received the joyful news that the Holy Family at length was to return from their place of banishment. An angel appeared to him by night and informed him that Herod was dead, and that he might safely return into the land of Israel. But when he arrived there he found that the tyrant had been succeeded by his son Archelaus, and that Judæa, over which he held sway, was therefore no safe abode for Jesus and Mary. What a bitter disappointment it must have been !

2. It seems as if St. Joseph had been deceived by Almighty God. He was encouraged to return, and now he found that the place of the dead king was occupied by a son who was not much better than his father. Yet no thought of discontent was harbored in St. Joseph's heart, not the faintest murmur of complaint escaped his lips. His was the true obedience—blind, confiding, unreasoning, uncomplaining obedience to the will of God. Can I say the same of myself ?

3. Observe St. Joseph's prudence. He might have said that the command to return was a sort of guarantee from Almighty God of his safety. In spite of this, he took the most extreme natural precautions, going far away from the place of danger. He knew that God requires us to use all natural means to gain our ends, and if we neglect them, we cannot reasonably trust to the supernatural intervention of God in our behalf.

**19th Day.—St. Joseph's Sixth Joy.  
The Life with Jesus and Mary at Nazareth.**

1. When St. Joseph found that dangers still threatened the safety of Jesus in the south of Palestine, he at once pushed on for Galilee. He was fertile in resource, and when one plan failed, another was soon with God's assistance destined to take its place. Here too he teaches me a lesson. If I meet with reverses I get discouraged and inclined to give up, instead of cheerfully looking out for some fresh means of serving God and accomplishing the work He has entrusted to me.

2. St. Joseph, under God's direction, journeys on to the town of Nazareth, where he had formerly lived, and there he re-enters the poor little cottage, humble and lowly enough, where he and his sacred spouse had formerly dwelt. There, a secret voice tells him, is to be his future home. How joyfully he takes possession of it! Now his wanderings were over, and he was to spend the rest of his days in peace in the tranquil home that God had prepared for him.

3. Yet how poor it was! The town of Nazareth was so despised that men did not think it possible that anything great or good could come from thence. Was this to be the home of the son of God? Yes; and St. Joseph rejoiced in the low esteem of Nazareth, because it seemed to him an arrangement quite according to God's designs that Jesus should dwell there, and that the name of Nazarene should cling to Him as a name of contempt. Why have I not more of his spirit? I am too fond of show and display, and all that the world thinks much of.



**20th Day.—St. Joseph's Seventh Sorrow.  
The Loss of Jesus for Three Days.**

1. It was obligatory on all Jews who were within a moderate distance of Jerusalem to pay a visit to the Temple once every year. In accordance with this law Joseph went up each year from Nazareth, and Mary went also. As soon as He was old enough, Jesus accompanied His parents. When He was twelve years old, He travelled thither, but on the return journey they missed Him. Vainly they sought Him everywhere, and with heavy hearts they asked each member of their company if they had seen Him. No, He was not there. Oh, what a bitter grief for St. Joseph! How terrible were those three days without Jesus!

2. Could it be through any negligence on his part? Joseph's motive for separating himself from Jesus had been a most unselfish one—that Mary might have the joy of His company. Men and women travelled in separate caravans, and children would travel with either. But perhaps he might have been more vigilant. Anyhow, he had lost Jesus, and what could be worse than that? How different from us, who too often remain content with earthly things, with scarce a thought of Jesus!

3. Joseph's grief was increased by witnessing the sorrow of Mary. Together they returned to Jerusalem, asking, like the spouse in the Canticles, "Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth?" All in vain; for three days and three nights no trace of Jesus. Those days appeared like centuries. Joseph, then, can sympathize with my desolation. He knows the terrible void, the joyless days, the weary nights, when Jesus is absent from the soul.

**21st Day.—St. Joseph's Seventh Joy.**  
**The Finding of Jesus in the Temple among the**  
**Doctors.**

1. For three days Joseph had sought for Jesus, and at length, wearied out with the fruitless search, he and Our Lady betook themselves to the Temple, that there, before the mercy-seat, they might beg God to have mercy on them. Here was true wisdom. Why do we not imitate them in desolation? In our temples we have not the symbolical presence of God, but God Himself, God Incarnate, waiting to listen to us. Why do I not more often have recourse to Him?

2. In one of the halls of the Temple they espied a group of old men gathered round a Boy, and absorbed in their conversation with Him. In an instant Joseph recognized Him Whom they sought. Now all his anxiety was at an end; the darkness of night was turned into the dazzling brightness of the glorious day. So in an instant Jesus can work for us the same merciful change, and by His presence can turn all our darkness into light.

3. What was Jesus doing? He was listening to what the rabbis had to say about the Messias, putting questions to them which set them a-thinking whether the time had not come for His appearance, answering their questions with such supernatural wisdom that the old men sat there astonished, and, as it were, in a trance. Jesus was anticipating His public ministry, beginning at that early age the work which He had come to accomplish. So from the first He began His work within my soul, suggesting holy thoughts, pouring in heavenly wisdom. Alas, how little have I learned His divine lessons!

## 22d Day.—St. Joseph as Head of the Holy Family.

1. The dignity of any office of authority is in proportion to the excellence of those over whom such authority is exercised. What then must have been the dignity and perfection of St. Joseph! To rule over the angels would be a small privilege compared with the privilege of ruling God Himself and His holy Mother. What prudence, what discretion, what purity of intention, what perfect unselfishness, what intense love of God and of men must have been found in St. Joseph! How humble he must have been, how thoughtful, how kind, how considerate, how wise, how faithful to God's holy inspirations! Next to Our Lady, it is impossible to suppose that any saint could approach the dignity of St. Joseph.

2. Watch St. Joseph as a superior. Notice how he gives his orders, firmly and decidedly, without hesitation, but yet kindly, and gently, and considerately. St. Joseph had to command others besides Jesus and Mary. To all he showed the same thoughtful, tender, watchful affection and respect. Am I like St. Joseph in dealing with those over whom I am placed?

3. Our Lord obeyed St. Joseph with the most perfect, unquestioning obedience. He, as man, was St. Joseph's natural superior; He, in His sacred humanity, had authority over all creation. He therefore, the Lord of all, raised St. Joseph to be lord over Him. This exalts still more the position of St. Joseph, who derived his authority over Jesus from Our Lord's own choice of him. Thus Jesus teaches us the happiness of obedience. To be subject is no degradation, but rather a privilege, since Jesus chose it.

### 23d Day.—St. Joseph, Father of Jesus.

We need not fear to apply this name to the holy foster-father of the Son of God, since it was given to him by Our Lady herself, when she said to Him in the Temple, "Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

1. He had the position of father of Jesus, and was recognized as such by the common consent. He had all the rights and the authority of a father, so far as any could have over the Son of God. His divine Foster-Son from His birth depended on him, as the child naturally depends upon his father. He fulfilled the office of father. God delegated to him the duties, the rights, the privileges of a father, and therefore the father of Jesus he is truly called.

2. We may also piously believe that his divine Son was made like to him in outward form. In the natural order of things, Jesus would not be made after the likeness of His holy Mother alone. The Holy Spirit, in fashioning the features of the Son of God, would have taken St. Joseph as in some sort the model to be followed in form and face. What must have been St. Joseph's beauty, sweetness of expression, symmetry of form, perfect purity of body and soul! What a contrast to my unsightliness and impurity!

3. When God calls a man by any name, He thereby ascribes to him whatever that name implies. How often Jesus called St. Joseph by the endearing name of father! By so doing, He showed that He was truly His father. His words were no mere fiction. O happy St. Joseph! it is no wonder that thou hast such power in heaven!

## 24th Day.—St. Joseph's Inner Life.

1. The inner life of the soul depends on the closeness of the union with God. None of the saints, save only the holy Mother of God, was ever so closely united to the will of God as St. Joseph. None so prompt in obedience. None so perfect in patient resignation. From him I will try and learn these means of drawing nearer to God. I must be more pliable to the will of God, more punctual and exact in obeying; more ready to submit to all that God ordains. Thus only can I hope for greater holiness and a life more closely united to Him.

2. St. Joseph had a privilege on earth which for all other saints is reserved for the eternal paradise, of being in the continual company of his God, of gazing on the sacred humanity of the Incarnate Word, of hearing from Him words of love and gratitude, of drinking in delicious draughts of heavenly delight from the words and looks of the Incarnate God. His life must have been one long ecstasy. If those who touched the hem of Jesus' garment received an inflow of heavenly virtue, what must he have received who nursed Him in infancy and bore him the closest company in youth and manhood!

3. How often St. Joseph called Jesus his dear Son, and Jesus in return called him His dear father! What happiness to him to have a right thus to address the Second Person of the Divine Trinity! What grace must have flowed into his heart when Jesus called him father! Pray that you may deserve to have Jesus smile sweetly on you, as He so often did upon His great foster-father.

## 25th Day.—St. Joseph's Strong Faith.

Faith consists in the ready acceptance of God's messages to us on His authority. It is tested by the difficulty of believing, and by the painful consequences to ourselves. We will try St. Joseph's faith by these methods.

1. The first message, which is recorded as having been given to St. Joseph, was that Mary was about to become a mother through the operation of the Holy Ghost. The news announced was a miracle of stupendous magnitude, a mystery inscrutable. Yet St. Joseph never doubted, never hesitated. He accepted it on God's authority, as if it were the simplest thing in the world.

2. The second message enjoined him to take the divine Child and His Mother, and fly in the darkness of the night to Egypt. There was no apparent reason, no danger known to St. Joseph. The journey was a perilous, painful, and most inconvenient one, and seemingly unnecessary. Yet St. Joseph hesitated not for an instant, doubted not, delayed not, but started before day dawned. What living, practical faith, so different from my doubting slowness!

3. It was this habit of faith which earned for him the continual society of Jesus Christ. St. Joseph never ceased to have present to him the Godhead of his Son; but at times he would forget the outward form before him, and would adore his God. So we should seek to realize that the Sacred Host does but veil the same God Incarnate, and should make many acts of faith before the Blessed Sacrament, and say, "My God and my Lord."

### 26th Day.—St. Joseph's Prudence.

Prudence is a virtue that we all value and desire. Let us look at this virtue in St. Joseph.

1. St. Joseph never acted on impulse. He always reflected before acting. What husband would not have put away his wife without any delay when he discovered that she was about to give birth to a child that was not his? Not so St. Joseph. He waited and pondered and prayed, and gradually formed the prudent resolve of sending her back in secret to her friends. Even after deciding on this plan as the best, he again waited and commended it to God, turned it over and over in his own mind, prayed still more before proceeding to act. It was this prudence of his, this charitable delay, that earned for him the solution of his doubts by an angel's voice.

2. St. Joseph had entrusted to him the training up of Jesus. The formation of the character of the divine Child was committed to him. What prudence, what perfect prudence must he have possessed whom God considered as the fit guardian of the Eternal Word! If I were more prudent, God would entrust to me greater works to be done for Him.

3. Our Lady must have had wonderful confidence in the prudence of her spouse when she arose unhesitatingly at dead of night to fly with him to Egypt, just because he told her he had had a dream warning him to do so. But she knew not only how naturally careful and wise he was, but that he had an infused and supernatural prudence that could not be deceived. If I were more prudent, others would trust me more, and listen with greater confidence to my advice or commands.

## 27th Day.—St. Joseph's Purity of Heart.

“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” One might almost think that Our Lord in uttering these words was thinking of His foster-father. It was because of his purity of heart that he had the privilege of seeing God face to face under the veil of flesh for nearly thirty years. Let us see what this meant.

1. It meant that St. Joseph must have been free from all sin, so far as was possible to one who had not Our Lady's singular privilege. The authority over the sinless Lamb of God would scarcely have been entrusted to one who was sinful. The constant association, the exchange of endearing love implied that His father was the purest of all men. To me, too, Christ commits Himself in holy Communion to be my guest and the food of my soul. What ought I to be!

2. Purity of heart involves also a knowledge of God. Who, save His Mother, knew Jesus as Joseph did? Who watched so intensely each movement, each look, each word? Who sought to imitate them and drink in His spirit as Joseph did? Who was modelled so perfectly after the likeness of Christ? How distant is my likeness to Christ! Nay, how unlike am I, alas, to Him!

3. St. Joseph had the extraordinary privilege of ministering with his own hands to Jesus, a privilege which the angels must needs have envied him. His ministry to Jesus was a source of continual grace. His acts of love to Jesus were acts of love to God. All was done for Jesus, knowing that he was doing it for God. O happy Joseph! Teach me to minister to others for Jesus' sake.



## 28th Day.—St. Joseph's Venerable Age.

1. St. Joseph during his long life had been fulfilling the meaning of the name he bore with unbroken constancy. He had been "adding" to the brightness of his virtues and the treasure of his merits with an ever-increasing speed. In the company of Jesus and Mary he had made more rapid progress than any of the other saints. O Joseph, what fervor must have been thine! what charity, what perfect purity! Was there an archangel in heaven equal to thee in love of God? How different thy lightning advance in grace to my sluggish slowness!

2. What was the secret of St. Joseph's high perfection? It was the calm, quiet peacefulness and tranquillity that enabled his pure soul to reflect in so wonderful a manner the likeness of God, and quickened his ears to catch the faintest whisper of divine grace. We cannot imagine him ever hurried, or over-eager, or anxious, or disorderly. If we could remove those defects we should soon become more like St. Joseph.

3. As St. Joseph grew old and his natural powers began to fail, the beauty of his soul became more and more apparent. Some think that like Moses he suffered none of the infirmities of age. At all events, he who as foster-father of Jesus occupied in some sort the place of the Eternal Father upon earth must have been an old man of incomparable beauty, the type and ideal of a saint and patriarch. Never were gray hairs crowned with such glory and honor as those of him whose happy old age had been spent with Jesus and Mary.

### 29th Day.—St. Joseph's Happy Death.

1. Never to any of the children of men did death come so bereft of its terrors as to St. Joseph. One who had lived so continually in the presence of his God had no cause to fear it. One whose thoughts, aspirations, hopes, affections, had always been in heaven, regarded death as a stepping-stone to his true home and to the presence of his God. One on whose breast Jesus had nestled lovingly had already had a foretaste of paradise, and was absorbed by the longing desire to be there. Have I the same reasons to welcome death?

2. Yet if any one ever had reason to dread the separation from earth, it was St. Joseph. None ever left behind him wife or child who were a thousandth part as dear as Mary and Jesus were to Joseph. Did it cost him nothing to say farewell? No, for from Jesus he could never be separated; and if the veil of flesh prevented him for a short time from intercourse with his virgin spouse, yet they would soon meet in endless union before the throne of God. The pain of separation disappeared at the thought of eternal bliss. If the company of Jesus and Mary was so sweet on earth, what would it be in heaven?

3. What a beautiful death was St. Joseph's! Nursed in the arms of Jesus and Mary, his last hours were one long ecstasy. No anxious, no distressing thought was possible in that sweet company. For St. Joseph death was only falling asleep to wake in paradise. He is therefore the patron of a good death. Pray earnestly to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that you may die in peace in their blessed company.

### 30th Day.—St. Joseph's Glory in Heaven.

1. It is an opinion held by many learned theologians that St. Joseph, like Our Lady, enjoys the honor of having had his body raised from the grave at the time of Our Lord's Resurrection, and that he is present in heaven now, body as well as soul. There are no relics of St. Joseph, no tomb where his body is honored. His assumption is moreover what we might expect in reward for such spotless purity as his. The spouse of Mary deserved this honor, and one who had tended Jesus with such loving care had a sort of claim to it. We may therefore piously believe that St. Joseph enjoys this wonderful privilege.

2. We have already spoken of St. Joseph as the most glorious of all the saints. What else does this mean but that he has the highest place in heaven after Our Lady? The Church calls him the glory of the inhabitants of heaven (*cœlitum decus*). How would this be possible unless he surpassed them all? Congratulate St. Joseph on his great glory, and thank God that you have a friend so near His throne.

3. St. Joseph was, after Mary, more like to his Divine Son in form and feature than any one else ever was. This likeness extended to his beautiful and stainless soul. In heaven he still retains this intimate likeness to Jesus, which grew and increased by reason of his close union with the Son of God and familiar intercourse with Him. Likeness to Christ! That is the increase of glory in heaven. Pray that you may become, through St. Joseph's help, more like to Jesus.

### 31st Day.—St. Joseph, Protector of the Faithful.

1. When God bade St. Joseph arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt, He was committing unto him, under the guise of Jesus and Mary, the care of the universal Church. As to Mary were entrusted all Christians in the words, "Woman, behold thy son," so to St. Joseph in the angel's message. He was to be our guardian and protector. He was to keep us safe in the dangerous journey of life; he was to console us and care for us in darkness and sorrow while we wait in this land of exile for the summons to our true home. Joseph, too, is to bring us safely into the promised land at last. O holy St. Joseph, be my friend and my protector and my keeper, amid all difficulties and dangers and temptations.

2. St. Joseph has care of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, as he had care of the mortal body of Jesus. He has to watch over it and guard its temporal interests. He has to defend it against the bitter enemies who seek its destruction. How often he has driven them back! How often, when all seemed lost, he has restored to the Church of God peace and prosperity! No weapon aimed against it can harm it, for God has given to St. Joseph the privilege of keeping it ever safe.

3. St. Joseph is also the protector of all his clients. In their temporal affairs how trusty a friend, saving them in circumstances apparently hopeless! In spiritual necessities how prompt to aid, how unflinching in resource! Oh, trust in St. Joseph, wait patiently for him, and **he will obtain for thee the desires of thy heart.**



**The Sacred Passion of Jesus  
Christ.**

SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR LENT.



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## PREFACE.

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THERE is no subject of meditation more pleasing to God and more profitable to the soul than the Passion of Jesus Christ. It contains in itself all sweetness. It is the remedy for every evil; the food that nourishes the soul. It is continued still in the Blessed Eucharist, and every Mass is a representation and renewal of the Sacred Passion. It is a subject always in season, but especially during the holy time of Lent.

These Meditations deal with some of the main incidents of Our Lord's Sacred Passion. They are intended to be begun on Ash Wednesday, and to end on Holy Saturday. A few verses of Scripture are suggested to be read before each meditation, as furnishing the subject-matter of which it treats.

## How to Meditate on the Passion.

St. Bonaventure tells us that if we desire to meditate with fruit on the Passion of Jesus Christ, three conditions are necessary. Our meditation must be :

1. *Humble*; for the Passion is unlike anything else in the world, it is unfathomable to human reason—a bottomless ocean of mystery. Reason must bow its head and confess its inability to grasp the mysteries that even Faith sees only darkly and through a glass. The story of Christ's humiliation is to the proud a sealed book; they see nothing attractive in it. Christ suffering has no beauty that they should admire Him. I must therefore begin by praying for humility.

2. *Full of confidence*; since the Passion is the source of all our confidence. It is the proof of the exceeding love wherewith Christ loved us. How can I fear with the sight before me of Christ suffering for love of me?

It is, too, a medicine for every possible evil, for every temptation, for every sin; whatever the malady of my soul, the Passion of Christ can cure it. At the foot of the cross each mortal wound will be made whole.

3. *Persevering*; the beauty of the Passion does not appear all at once. The world considers it a degradation, the careless and the indifferent pass it by unmoved; even the faithful Christian scarcely penetrates beneath the surface of that Divine Mystery, unless he prays earnestly and continually to appreciate it. Only gradually and by degrees are we drawn by the sacred attractiveness of the cross.

Before I begin my meditations I must ask God for this spirit of humility, confidence, persistency.

## Ash Wednesday—The Anticipation of the Passion.

Read St. Matthew xvi. 21; xvii. 21, 22.

1. From the first moment of His Incarnation our blessed Lord had ever before His eyes the prospect of His approaching Agony and Death. It was present to Him, not vaguely and uncertainly, like pain and suffering to which men look forward, but vividly and distinctly, as at the actual time when He suffered. Never for a single moment was it absent from His thoughts. O wondrous love of our Incarnate God, Who thus employed His divine power to protract His sufferings by His continual prospect!

2. Yet in spite of this He was always cheerful and full of brightness and joy of heart. His coming Agony did not weigh Him down or depress Him. In spite of the bitterness of the chalice, of the unspeakable agony ever present to Him, no cloud overcast His brow, no weakness or dread was manifest to His apostles, no thought of self interfered with His perfect sympathy for others. He was a pattern of divine unselfishness; the unselfish always forget their own troubles, and so can comfort and help others.

3. But our blessed Lord not only was not cast down by the approaching Passion, He actually longed for it. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" His love for men was such that He rejoiced in the thought of suffering for us. How can I ever thank Him as I ought? How can I show my love for Him Who loved me with so great a love?

## First Thursday in Lent—The Preliminaries of the Passion.

Read St. Luke xxii. 1-6.

1. During the first days of the week in which He suffered, our blessed Lord had been teaching all day in the Temple. The assembled crowd had cried, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It seemed as if He were going to be acknowledged by the voice of the people as the King of Israel. How deceptive are appearances! How often, when all seems going well and the cause of Christ about to triumph, some grievous disappointment is at hand!

2. Side by side with the enthusiasm of the people grew the rage and fury of the chief priests and scribes. Why did they thus hate Him Who went about doing good? In their selfishness and cupidity they feared lest He should interfere with their influence and they thus lose their position, their reputation, their gains. Pride and self-love blinded their eyes, and made them hate with a bitter hatred the Son of God. Am I not sometimes blinded by like feelings? filled with unjust dislike of others because they seem to interfere with my influence or my personal interests?

3. The chief priests had a great advantage in the fact that in the little company that surrounded Jesus there was a traitor. Judas, impelled by avarice, had been first a thief, and then had made overtures to betray his Master. O fatal love of money, to harden the heart of man! How careful must I be not to set my heart on any earthly possessions, since nothing has a more deadly power than this to separate me from the love of Jesus!

## First Friday in Lent—The Supper in Simon's House.

Read St. Mark xiv. 3-11.

1. The supper in Simon's house was remarkable for St. Mary Magdalene's act of devotion to our Divine Lord. She brought an alabaster box of ointment of precious spikenard, and poured it on His head as He sat at table. Her gift was very pleasing to Our Lord for three reasons: (a) she gave of her best; (b) she gave out of pure love; (c) she gave in presence of the assembled guests, fearlessly and knowing that men would ridicule and blame her. Are the gifts I give to God marked by generosity, supernatural love, absence of all human respect?

2. Some of those present, instigated by Judas, began to criticise what they regarded as waste. They had indignation within themselves and showed it in words. They veiled their grumbling under show of charity to the poor. This was very displeasing to Jesus. He hates the spirit that finds fault and criticises and condemns, and all the more when it hides itself under the cloak of virtue. Yet is not this spirit strong in me?

3. Notice the gratitude of Jesus. A little box of ointment poured on His head earns for the donor a commemoration of her gift wherever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world. And not only this: it obtains for her also many graces on earth and great glory in heaven. There is no one who is so grateful as Jesus Christ; no one who will reward with such divine generosity everything done from love to Him. Nothing will be forgotten, nothing is too small to be noticed and richly recompensed by Him.

## First Saturday in Lent—The Eating of the Paschal Lamb.

Read St. Luke xxii. 14-18.

Our blessed Lord, before He suffered, celebrated the Jewish rite which above all the rest foreshadowed His own sacred sufferings. The paschal lamb was an exact type of Him, the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world.

1. The paschal lamb was the means employed by Almighty God to deliver His people from Egypt. It was the sprinkling of its blood on the posts of the door which caused the avenging angel to pass by and leave the inmates unharmed. So the Blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled on our souls, in the sacraments and when we make an act of contrition, saves us from the vengeance that would otherwise fall upon us. O Jesus! sprinkle me with one drop of Thy precious Blood, and I shall be free from sin.

2. The paschal lamb had to be drained of the last drop of its blood. So the Lamb of God shed for us the last drop of His precious Blood. He was not satisfied with merely giving His life for us, but He must needs endure all the intense agony, the burning thirst which came of this draining of His whole body for love of us. How can I ever thank Him as I ought?

3. The lamb suffers uncomplainingly. It never murmurs against its lot, or struggles against those who lead it here and there; unlike the filthy swine, that grunt and grumble at every attempt to control them. None was ever so submissive as the Lamb of God. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it." Can I echo these words?

## The First Sunday in Lent—Jesus' Desire for His Sufferings.

Read St. Luke xii. 49, 50.

1. How are we to account for Christ's desire to suffer? Human nature shrinks from suffering and dreads it, and none of the sons of men was ever so sensitive as He, or had sufferings to look forward to in any way comparable to His. Yet in spite of this Christ longed for His sufferings. O wondrous love, that not only suffered for us, but longed for the time when His Passion should come!

2. Was it the suffering in itself for which Christ longed? Impossible. It was for the result of that suffering, for the joy that was set before Him, that He endured the cross and despised the shame. Even Christ could not work without the prospect of some reward. So we should encourage ourselves with the thought of the glorious recompense God will give to all who suffer for Him and who unite their sufferings to the sacred sufferings of the Son of God.

3. But what sort of reward was that to which the Son of God looked forward? It was no selfish reward. It was the pure, unselfish joy of seeing others happy, of knowing that by all He was to endure millions of mankind would be freed from the eternal misery of hell, and raised to the eternal and unspeakable joy of the beatific vision. He knew that it was by sufferings that graces must be won for others. This lesson, too, the saints learned from their Master. How have I learned it? Do I recognize the necessity, the dignity, the happiness of suffering?



## Monday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Washing of the Feet.

Read St. John xiii. 2-20.

1. When the paschal supper was finished, Our Lord rose from table, laid aside His upper garment, and girding Himself with a towel, He filled a basin with water and went from one to another of the apostles, washing with His sacred hands the feet of each. This act was intended to teach us the happiness of performing menial services for those around us. To wait on others, especially on our inferiors, for Christ's sake, is far more honorable than to be waited on by them; to make ourselves the servants of others is far more noble than to be served by them. Is this the principle on which I act?

2. In this act were combined the two virtues which are most prominent in Our Lord's life on earth—*charity* and *humility*. Charity takes a pleasure in everything that promotes the happiness or the comfort of our fellow-men because they are the brethren of Christ. Humility takes a pleasure in whatever puts us in an inferior position, in one to which no worldly honor or dignity attaches, but rather contempt and humiliation. How sadly wanting I am in these virtues! I dislike charity if it costs me anything, and I positively hate to be humbled, to be despised by men.

3. Yet Christ's words are true: the disciple is not greater than His Master. If our Divine Master was glorious in the sight of the angels as He stooped to wash the apostles' feet, our road to glory must be by stooping, by ministering in all humility to others. We never can be as great as our Master. We must take care lest our selfishness and pride place us in direct contrast with the Son of God.

## Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

Read St. Luke xxii. 19, 20.

1. St. Paul tells us with pointed emphasis that it was on the very night in which He was betrayed that Our Lord instituted the mystery of mysteries, the sacrament of His love. It was worthy of His divine generosity to choose the occasion when He was to be outraged, insulted, betrayed, scourged, and crucified, to invent this wondrous sacrament of love. To forgive is always generous, but what shall we say of the generosity of One who not only forgives the most horrible insults and cruelty, but chooses the very day on which He is to suffer them for giving to His enemies a gift compared with which all other gifts are small and insignificant—a gift, too, which is none other than Himself?

2. What is the primary end of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist? Our Lord Himself tells us in the words: "Do this in commemoration of Me." It is for the sake of putting us in mind of His sacred Passion that He gives Himself to us, that we, His brethren, for whom He died, may not forget Him. He loved us so dearly—He loves us still so dearly—that He cannot bear to be absent from our thoughts, and for this end He invented this means of representing His Passion to us as long as the world should last.

3. But the Blessed Eucharist is more than a commemoration of the sacrifice on the cross. It is the same sacrifice continued; the same Priest, the same Victim, only the manner of offering changed. Christ is still slain each time holy Mass is said; the oblation on the cross is an eternal oblation for the sins of the whole world.

## Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Farewell Discourse of Jesus.

Read St. John xiv. 1-3, 27-31.

1. Our Lord's farewell to His apostles begins and ends with words of encouragement. He knew the importance of courage and confidence, and that without these they would never do great things for God. He knew, too, how liable all men are to be discouraged and cast down when troubles and trials arise; how hard it is to struggle on when all seems dark around. To us as well as to the twelve He says: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God; believe also in Me." Why do not we believe more in Christ, trust Him more, appeal more to Him in times of darkness? He will always have a word of comfort for us. "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you."

2. Amid all the troubles that Our Lord foretells to His apostles, He promises them one gift that will enable them to rise above all their difficulties and all their sorrows. He promises to leave with them peace. What gift in the world is there which is like this? If we are at peace, we can bid defiance to all our foes; if we are not at peace, we might be lords of the universe, yet we should be miserable. No wonder we pray in holy Mass, *Dona nobis pacem*—Give us peace.

3. The peace Our Lord promises is *His* peace: "My peace I give unto you." What sort of peace is this? It is the peace He enjoyed all through His life—the peace of perfect union of His will with God's. If we are thus united to God by perfect resignation, we too shall have unalterable and eternal peace.

**Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent—  
On the Road to Gethsemani.**

Read St. Mark xiv. 26-34.

1. After singing one of the paschal hymns, Our Lord and His apostles went forth to the Garden of Gethsemani. On the way a strange sorrow spread over the countenance of Jesus. His unfailing cheerfulness forsook Him. His disciples wondered at the sudden change. It was the shadow of His sacred Passion which fell upon Him, the beginning of the black darkness which was to envelop His Sacred Heart. When the shadow of desolation falls on me, may I remember Thee, O Lord, thus downcast on the road to Gethsemani!

2. In mournful words Our Lord addresses the apostles: "You will all be scandalized in My regard this night. You will all fly like cowards when the danger comes. One of you will betray Me, another will deny Me thrice, all will forsake Me." How this thought pierced with anguish the sensitive heart of Jesus! Of all who for three years had been His chosen friends and companions, who had seen His miracles and listened to His divine words, not one would be found faithful. My God, how often have I been found unfaithful to Thee!

3. At length Our Lord's bitter sorrow breaks out in words still more mournful: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." The darkness which was gathering round Him was even then like the darkness of death. He began to fear and to be very heavy. He could hardly endure the misery which even then began to fall on Him. Pray for sympathy with Jesus, and the power of appreciating a little the divine love which undertook all this for your sake.

## Friday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Sacred Agony in the Garden.

Read St. Matthew xxvi. 30-40.

1. During the Agony in the Garden Our Lord anticipated all the coming agony of His Passion. He allowed His human soul to feel in all its intensity each detail of the unspeakable suffering that was now close at hand. Hitherto it had indeed been distinctly present to Him, but now it seemed to take possession of His whole soul. Now it was a mortal fear, resulting from a clear, vivid realization of all that He had to endure. When darkness invades our souls, we should remember that none is like the deep, black darkness that spread over the sacred soul of Jesus.

2. What relief did Jesus seek in this agony of terror that had come over Him? The relief of prayer. He knew that in all desolation and distress the best plan, the only plan, is to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God. There is no imperfection in asking to be delivered from something that we can scarcely endure, whether present agony or the anticipation of it, else Christ would not have prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!" In our darkest hours we can at least repeat these sacred words that were spoken as a pattern to us.

3. Yet we must remember the conclusion of the prayer, the act of resignation, which leaves all in the hands of God. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" These words spoken from our hearts will always give us strength to bear what seems unbearable, and will take the bitterness out of our pains.

## Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Aggravation of the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Mark xiv. 32-42.

1. If it is difficult to suffer, it is far more difficult to suffer willingly for those who show no gratitude in return for what we endure for them. But most difficult, nay, impossible, save to one who is himself divine, or else shares the divine charity of the Son of God, to suffer for those who requite our love with hatred, our sufferings with bitter mockery, the favors we win for them by outrages and insults. It was this that crushed to the earth the Son of God. Alas! how ungrateful I am to Him!

2. During His sacred Agony He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. Not in a general way, but individually, so that each and every sin, from the first sin of Adam to the last that shall be committed on the eve of the judgment, was present before Him; and not only present, but each added its own pang. The great black cloud which passed before His soul contained each sin of each individual man, woman, and child, and Christ suffered for each. What a frightful thing it must be to commit deliberately even the least sin, if thereby we add fresh pain to the agony of Jesus!

3. It was in this way that "He was made sin for us," i.e., He identified Himself with sin as far as it was possible for the Immaculate Lamb of God. He took upon Him all the effects of sin except those which necessarily belong to him who is guilty of the act of sin. All the darkness, all the gloom, the despondency, the loss of God, the feeling of hopelessness, the terror, which arise from sin inundated His sacred soul.

## The Second Sunday in Lent—The Help for the Saints in the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Matthew xxvi. 40-44.

1. Our blessed Lord was not satisfied with taking upon Himself the sins of the world; in His divine mercy and compassion He added to this a further sacrifice of Himself. He also took upon Himself all the sufferings of the just, and especially all that His saints and martyrs would have to suffer for Him. He endured beforehand the thousand forms of agony to which they would be subjected for His sake. Not only would He in His love and mercy redeem them, but "He bore their infirmities and carried their sorrows." What sufficient thanks can we show to Him for His unbounded goodness?

2. This it is which enabled the martyrs to despise their torments, and made the apostles rejoice to suffer shame for His sake. This it is which makes tolerable anguish which otherwise would be intolerable; for if it be borne patiently for love of Christ, He has already in Himself, if not exhausted its bitterness, at least taken the main part of it on Himself. Every pang, every struggle, every throb of agony which should fall to the lot of His servants till the end of the world, He made His own for their relief.

3. For this reason we are taught to unite our sufferings with those of Our Lord; for what else does this mean except that He desires to share them with us? In point of fact, the more we do, the more we bear our troubles with a supernatural motive, the lighter they will become, or rather the greater will be our power and willingness to bear them. I will be more resigned, more patient, for Christ's sake; to Him I will offer all my sufferings and unite them to His.

**Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent—The  
Consolations of the Sacred Agony.**

Read St. Luke xxii. 40-46.

1. No words can tell, no human heart can conceive, the intensity of the sacred Agony of Jesus. It would have crushed Him out of His very life had He not by means of His Divinity supported His sacred humanity, and so enabled it to suffer more. See Him pale, haggard, scarce to be recognized in His abasement and His terror! See the sweat of blood pouring from His sacred limbs! Can this be the well-beloved Son of God? My God, make me more contrite at the thought that I have taken part in bringing Thee to this.

2. But He was not without consolation in His Agony. An angel was sent to comfort Him, to present before His vision the innumerable company of the saints won by His precious Blood. He saw their joy and happiness to be won by His sacred Passion, by the labor of His soul, and seeing it He was satisfied to bear it all. O pure, unselfish joy! O joy surpassing all other joys! The joy of seeing others happy was the promised reward which supported Jesus in His Agony.

3. But He had a still greater and stronger support than this. He beheld the honor and glory that would accrue to His Eternal Father. He saw that all the glory God would reap from His works would be as nothing in comparison with this greatest work to be wrought by His Eternal Son, and seeing this He was satisfied, and more than satisfied. In the head of the Book it is written of Him: "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it." Have I the glory of God at heart as the first and foremost motive of my actions?



## Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lert—The Sequel of the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Mark xiv. 41. 42.

1. At length Our Lord's mental agony in the Garden was over; He had accepted the Chalice which His heavenly Father had given Him to drink. Now He is no longer sad and downcast, but He returns to His apostles full of vigor and courage. He encounters His Passion almost with eagerness. This is always the result of a perfect submission to the will of God and absolute confidence in Him. God will always give us the courage to meet every trial, and when the time comes He will impart strength and force and light-heartedness that make it easy to face the trial.

2. Yet this change had another cause. It was won by prayer; or, rather, Our Lord as our Divine Example imparted for our sakes to His human nature grace such as earnest prayer alone can obtain for men from God. This is the secret of all spiritual victories; all are won by persevering prayer. Prayer changes the poor, timid, frightened, shrinking soul to one brave and courageous and ready to do great things for God. Without prayer we are sure to fail. Am I earnest in prayer?

3. We observe, too, that it was not merely prayer, but *repeated* prayer—the same words over and over again, the same entreaty to be spared, joined to the same act of resignation. We sometimes say we cannot pray, but at least we can repeat over and over again some prayer for mercy and for help. Our repetitions will be not vain repetitions, but will bring certain relief from Him Who encourages us to importunity in prayer.

## Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent— The Betrayal of Jesus.

Read St. Matthew xxvi. 47-50.

1. As soon as Jesus had for the third time roused the apostles from their slumber, the tramp of approaching soldiery is heard, and presently a band is seen escorted by the Pharisees and ancients, and headed by one who acts as their guide. Who is it who has pointed out Christ to His foes? Alas! it is none other than the traitor Judas; one of the chosen twelve who had lived for three years in familiar intercourse with Jesus, listened to His words of grace, seen His acts of love and mercy. If Judas fell so low, I too am in continual danger. How awful a thing it would be if I too were to turn traitor to Jesus!

2. Our Lord does not shrink away from Judas as we do from those who we think have treated us ill. On the contrary, He advances to meet him with words of friendship, in spite of the deadly wrong He had received. How is it we are so unforgiving, so slow to make friendly advances, so ready to wrap ourselves up in our offended dignity? It is because we are so ungenerous, so petty, so mean, so unlike to Jesus.

3. Jesus still loved Judas, sought to win Judas, strove by words of gentle remonstrance to bring him to a sense of his wickedness before it was too late. "Friend, whereto art thou come?" He calls this miserable wretch His friend. Jesus meant what He said; for He is the friend of sinners, even the greatest. He then is my friend, so why should I fear?

## Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent— The Apprehension of Jesus.

Read St. John xviii. 2-11.

1. When Judas had given to his Master the traitor's kiss, Our Lord, knowing that His hour was come, boldly advanced to meet His enemies, and told them that He was Jesus of Nazareth. At this word they went backward and fell to the ground. If this was the result of Our Lord's presenting Himself to them in His humiliation and abasement, what will be the terror and the dread of sinners when He comes again in all His glory? O my God, grant that I may have no sin upon my soul, no debt still to pay, when I appear before the judgment-seat of Christ!

2. The soldiers then advanced to seize Jesus. St. Peter, with impetuous courage and loyalty, draws his sword and attacks the servants of the high-priest, and in the affray cuts off the ear of one of them. But Our Lord checks him, and bids him put up his sword into the scabbard. His loyalty was natural, not supernatural, and it did not endure long in the face of danger. Natural motives, however good, will not serve the cause of God.

3. When Our Lord was in the hands of His enemies, all the apostles forsook Him and fled. Not one was found to remain by His side in His abandonment. It was the will of God that He should suffer *alone*. "I looked about, and there was none to help; I sought, and there was none to give aid." Christ then suffered alone, and He can sympathize with that loneliness in suffering which adds so much to its bitterness.

## Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent—Jesus Led Away Captive.

Read St. John xviii. 12, 13.

1. The chief priests and Pharisees had brought with them a coil of rope with which they bound tightly the sacred hands of Jesus, and He was led away like a lamb going to the slaughter. This is the beginning of the apparent powerlessness of Jesus. He Who before bid defiance to His enemies, put them to the rout by word and work, now seems unable to resist them, feeble and helpless in their hands. Yet under this apparent weakness was hidden a divine force; nay, it was this very weakness which was the means of conquering the whole world.

2. The officers tied the hands of Jesus, so that He could no longer lay them upon the sick and the afflicted, to heal their diseases and their miseries. So we too tie the hands of Jesus by bands far more fatal, in hindering His power to heal the sickness of our soul. When we reject His graces and turn a deaf ear to His counsel, we render Him powerless to assist us; He cannot bestow upon us the blessings He delights to impart: our obstinacy has tied His hands so that He cannot help us as He would.

3. Often in our desire to work for others we find our hands tied. Something hinders our charitable designs; some hostile influence renders us apparently powerless. Our prayers seem to avail nothing; our kind acts are rejected; we seem to do the wrong thing when trying our best to do what is right. Yet we must not repine; we are only treading in our Master's steps. The very suffering entailed in this is a sure means of earning the graces we desire

## Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent—In the House of Annas.

Read St. John xviii. 19-24.

1. Try to picture the scene; watch the persons, listen to their words, observe their actions. Annas, a cunning, bitter, cynical old man, delighted to find his enemy in his power; the Pharisees' crowding round in eager excitement, the false witnesses trying to concoct a plausible story, and in the midst Jesus, sorrowful, bleeding, exhausted, yet calm and full of dignity. Hear the insulting questions of Annas, the derisive jeers of the Pharisees, the shouts of the mob, the firm, quiet, gentle words of Jesus. See the angry, eager gestures of the enemies of Christ, the assumed indignation, of the judge, the cruel blow struck by the mailed hand of the soldier on the face of Jesus, causing the blood to flow from His sacred mouth.

2. Christ received this blow upon His face to atone for our sins of the tongue, for the wicked words, the censorious words, the uncharitable words, the impure words that too often proceed from our mouth. Grant, O Lord, that I may remember Thee suffering this cruel blow, and so may learn to hate my sins of the tongue, that inflicted it upon Thee.

3. Our Lord desired to teach us another lesson, viz., to bear with patience and gentleness all outrage and unkindness, all reproaches and ill-usage, and especially such as we endure for His sake. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake." But we must take care to bear it *for Christ's sake*, and for love of Him, if we would earn the blessing.

## **The Third Sunday in Lent—In the Palace of Caiphas.**

Read St. Mark xiv. 55-64.

1. From the house of Annas Jesus was dragged to the palace of Caiphas the high-priest. Notice the bustle and activity that prevails: the chief priests and council searching everywhere for a show of evidence; messengers sent to and fro; bribes offered; all the most worthless summoned to testify against Him. This is always the way: the wicked so much more active in fighting against God than the good in fighting in His behalf; Our Lord's disciples and friends are doing nothing, while His enemies are seeking to destroy Him. When I look at myself, how little I have done, how little I do now, for the interests of Jesus!

2. The false witnesses who came forward had a certain show of truth. The words they quoted against Him were really spoken. They had learned the ways of their master the devil; Satan, when he deceives, always mixes up a large element of truth with his deceits. This is why we should never argue with him, for he can represent what is false and unlawful as true and right, if once we listen, by bringing into prominence the element of truth it contains.

3. These false witnesses, in spite of their cunning, could not agree together, but contradicted one another. It is one of the certain tests of error, that it is inconsistent and self-contradictory; the city of confusion and the home of strife always thus betrays its imposture. Jarring discord is the mark of the foes of Christ; peace and concord are the privilege of those who are on His side. How I should thank God that He has caused me to dwell in the City of Truth, the Church of the Living God!

## Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent—The Condemnation of Christ.

Read St. Mark xiv. 60-64.

1. In the midst of the false witnesses and their lying testimony Jesus remains silent. The high-priest, angry and impatient, urges Him to reply: "Answerest Thou nothing to the things which these witness against Thee?" Still Jesus answers not a word. How different from our eager anxiety to answer every accusation and every word of blame! How much better if we could hold our peace after the example of Jesus!

2. At length the high-priest rises and asks a direct question; nay, he summons Christ in the name of God to declare the truth: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Ordered by authority, Jesus at once says: "I am; and one day I shall come in all the power of God that is now entrusted to you as the high-priest of God." Another lesson for us. We must obey authority even where he who carries it shamefully abuses it; for those in authority, like Caiphas, speak in their official capacity as in the place of God.

3. When Christ declares Himself to be the Son of God, the high-priest and the council rise indignantly to protest against such blasphemy. In this they are the type of modern heretics who accuse the Church of God and the Vicar of Christ of blasphemously usurping divine prerogatives. Pride and jealousy and self-love so blinded the eyes of the Sanhedrim that they called good evil, and evil good; condemned the Son of God to death because He told them the truth. My God, preserve me from ever being thus blinded by sin!

## **Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent— St. Peter's Denial of Jesus.**

Read St. Luke xxii. 55-62.

1. What was the secret of Peter's miserable fall? He was brave and generous, and loved Our Lord dearly. Yet, through human respect and fear, he denied all knowledge of Him. The reason why he fell was that he trusted in himself and his natural qualities instead of in God. In the spiritual warfare natural courage and generosity avail not. He who does not rely upon God alone is sure to fall. When dangers are imminent he loses heart, and then all goes wrong.

2. St. Peter had not yet learned that natural impulse as a motive of action is sure to lead man astray. It never avails before God. Its excellence, whatever it may be, only avails in the things of this world, and even there it is a dangerous and untrustworthy motive. In things divine it is the road to ruin. We must exercise anti-impulsive effort if we are to be safe. We must do more; we must turn our thoughts to God, and seek a divine impulse, an inspiration from Heaven, if we are to remain faithful and avoid frequent faults.

3. St. Peter had neglected prayer. Our Lord had expressly warned him to watch and pray, and he had allowed himself to sleep while Christ was suffering His sacred Agony. True, he was weary and his eyes were heavy, but still he could have made the attempt. It might have seemed an unsatisfactory prayer, yet it would have saved Peter from his fall. He might have used vocal prayers and repeated the same words like Our Lord did. Learn from this that mere struggle against heaviness is very pleasing to God.



**Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent—St. Peter's Repentance.** (Read St. Luke xxii. 55-62.)

1. St. Peter had thrice denied his Master, and the third time with oaths and curses. He was ashamed of Christ, afraid to own himself a servant of Christ, and all because of a woman's jeering tongue. As I look over my life, how many times there have been when I have been faithless as Peter was! I have not boldly spoken out as I ought. I have perhaps taken part in talk hateful to my Lord and Master. I have been ashamed to run counter to uncharitable or evil conversation, though I knew well enough that it was sinful.

2. After the third denial the cock crew, and at the same time Our Lord turned and looked on Peter. It was at the moment when He was being dragged from the tribunal to the servant's room, amid the jeers and mockery of the soldiers. All this time St. Peter had been present to His thoughts, amid all the outrages and insults; and not St. Peter alone, but all who, though not at heart disloyal, nevertheless fall through weakness into sin. Remember me, O Lord, when I am in danger of falling, and when Satan desires to have me that he may riddle me as wheat.

3. That look pierced the heart of St. Peter with a keen pang of shame and sorrow and repentance. How could he have been faithless to the Lord Whom he loved and for Whom he had joyfully given up all! At once he made his way out of the hall, and with tears of anguish begged for pardon. Those tears were not unmixed with the sweet consolation of knowing that he was forgiven, and with a firm resolution not to let this fall discourage him. Here is a model for me when I have sinned.

**Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Jesus  
in the Guard-room of Caiphas.**

Read St. Luke xxii. 63-65.

1. After Our Lord had been condemned to death, the Sanhedrim rose, and He was handed over for custody during the night to the soldiers and servants, who, taking the cue from their masters, treated their prisoner with every kind of brutal ill-usage. They tied a dirty rag over His face, and struck Him on the face, challenging Him at the same time to show His divine power by saying the name of the striker. When He was silent, they mocked and jeered at Him, and at last they spat their filthy spittle in His sacred face. O my Lord, King of heaven and earth, how couldst Thou suffer Thy Divine Majesty to be outraged by these wretches?

2. Yet Our Lord was never more glorious than in the midst of His degradation and contempt. If at His baptism He was the beloved Son of God in Whom He was well pleased, much more now Each blow, each gibe, each insult added to the glory of His sacred humanity to all eternity. Truly then does St. Peter say: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed." Wisely did the apostles count it joy to suffer shame for His sake. My God, I know it is so; but do I act on this principle, and rejoice in the reproaches and contempt that fall to my lot?

3. What did Christ specially atone for in the guard-room? For all the filthy words men speak, for all the obscene jests, for all the mockery of holy things, for all the angry, cruel, uncharitable words. Alas! my Jesus, have I not taken part in these insults poured upon Thee?

## Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Jesus is Dragged Before Pilate.

Read St. Luke xxii. 66-70; xxiii. 1.

1. At daybreak the council assembled, and Jesus was again brought before them and questioned again. The sentence of death passed the night before was confirmed. The whole multitude then hastened to Pilate with their prisoner, that they might obtain from the Roman governor the ratification of the sentence which they could not carry out themselves. They were resolved to have His life—anything to be rid of Him Whom they dreaded and hated. How strange it seems that they should so hate Him without a cause! Yet it is ever so: men who are proud and covetous and selfish instinctively hate the truth. This is why there prevails all over the world such a deadly enmity to the Church of Christ.

2. To wreak their vengeance, the Pharisees and ancients were ready to rise with the sun. How active men are in promoting worldly interests and criminal designs! So much more active than in working for God and for heaven. Might I not do something more by rising a little earlier or more punctually, so as to do something to please Our Lord before I begin my ordinary work? At least I might think of Him and offer my heart and my life to Him.

3. The Jews actually delivered over one of their own sacred nation to their enemies and oppressors, the Romans. No means are too base to get rid of their enemy. How much unreasoning malice I have shown against those whom I disliked or who interfered with my selfish interests, perhaps against those who are not only brethren of Christ, but very dear to Him?

## Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Judas' Repentance.

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 3-16.

1. When Judas heard the unanimous voice of the chief priests and ancients declaring that Jesus was guilty of death, his soul was filled with a black remorse that made his life intolerable. How he hated the miserable pieces of silver for which he had sold his Master! How he hated the chief priests who had bribed him! How he hated himself! The sweetness and gentleness of Christ came vividly before him, and only added to his misery, as it will add to the misery of the lost at the day of judgment. How bitterly he repented his folly! At least he would rid himself of the accursed money and declare his guilt. But he had gone too far. He had refused so often to listen to the voice of Jesus that now his hardened heart refused to melt. What a warning to all who turn a deaf ear to the voice of conscience!

2. Yet he might have been forgiven even now if he had thrown himself at Jesus' feet and begged for pardon. But this he would not do. His repentance was a hopeless, black remorse—no element of hope or love or humble sorrow. It was the repentance of the lost in hell, who cry, "Fools that we were!" but yet will not, cannot, humble themselves to cry for mercy.

3. How miserable Judas had been from the first! Had those pilfered gains in early days brought him solid satisfaction? Had he been happy when he sacrificed his Master's interests to his own? Are we happy when we knowingly prefer our own selfish interests to those of Christ? Sin and misery are twin sisters. My God, may I never wilfully betray Thy interests to my own pleasure or gain!

## The Fourth Sunday in Lent—Jesus Before Pilate.

Read St. John xviii. 28-40.

1. Pilate was at first inclined to look with contempt on the charge brought against Christ of setting Himself up as King of the Jews. But he soon changed his tone. He was astonished at Our Lord's silence and reserve. His calm dignity made a deep impression on him. How few there are who imitate Christ in this! Our babbling tongues pour forth so many foolish and ill-considered words. Learn of Jesus the dignity of timely silence.

2. Yet Jesus spoke when occasion required. He said enough to Pilate to convince him not only of His innocence, but of His claim to be king. Pilate was half-inclined to listen. He could not help recognizing in some degree the divine beauty of the Son of God amid all His humiliations. So the Catholic Church manifests herself to the world in a way that is sufficient to attract men of good will. There are few who have not the chance of recognizing her claims. Her beauty even in her humiliations and amid the sins of men shines forth as did the beauty of her Divine Spouse.

3. Pilate's long experience tells him plainly enough that the Jews are all wrong and Christ is right. His practised eye detects the malice of the Jews, their hatred of their Victim, their selfishness and unscrupulous cruelty. He longs to release Christ; he knows he ought to do so, but he fears the Jews, lest he be reported as favoring revolt. Human respect overcomes his convictions, and he has not the courage to set Jesus free. How fatal is cowardice in things divine!

**Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—  
Jesus Before Herod.**

Read St. Luke xxiii. 7-12.

1. When Pilate found that the Jews were determined on the death of Jesus, he tried to get rid of the responsibility by sending Him to Herod. Herod rejoiced to see Him. In his vanity he expected that Our Lord would be glad to conciliate him by performing some miracle in his presence. Vain expectation! It is only for the humble and pure of heart that Our Lord works miracles. Yet I expect Him to work for me, proud and selfish as I am, miracles of grace, to enable me to easily overcome long-rooted faults, to attain a spirit of prayer and close union with Him. How can I hope for this while I am so full of the worldly spirit of Herod?

2. Our Lord was ready enough to speak to Pilate, and even to Caiphaz; but for Herod He had not a word. There is something terrible in this silence in the presence of the sensual, hardened reprobate. There is something in a sensual life that shuts the ears of men so that the whispers of grace never seem to reach them. If I want Our Lord to speak to me, the first thing is to see that I do not indulge my body inordinately.

3. Herod was also the incarnation of self-satisfied worldliness. He was munificent, popular, successful; but he was hateful in God's sight, and rejected by Him, so that Our Lord showed an aversion to him that He showed to none else. What a lesson for us! The reprobate Herod surrounded by flatterers and admirers; the Eternal Wisdom of God dressed in a fool's dress and treated as an idiot!

## Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent— Barabbas or Jesus?

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 15-22.

1. Before Pilate sent Our Lord to Herod, he had already sought to take occasion to release Him, from the custom of setting free at the Pasch some notable prisoner. In order to secure success, he had proposed as an alternative a noted murderer named Barabbas. To his astonishment, the name of Barabbas had at once been taken up by the multitude. It was not that they loved Barabbas, but they hated Christ. So wretched men now choose what they know is evil simply because they hate God. They cannot bear the idea of submission. They long to get God out of the way, as the Jews desired to be rid of Christ.

2. The multitude shouted for Barabbas because the chief priests urged them to it. It was the rulers, the ancients, who were the real murderers of Christ; the ignorant mob did but follow their leaders. What a responsibility it is to be in a position of authority! What an account those who rule will have to give of those subject to them!

3. When Christ returned from the palace of Herod clad in the fool's garment, Pilate made one more attempt to get Him released. It was a fresh compromise with his conscience, and, like all such compromises, only brought fresh insults on the Son of God. Again the shout rose for Barabbas to be set free, and Christ to be crucified. O Pilate! why not listen to the whisper within you, and set the just man free at any risk? My God, save me from cowardly compromises and dallying with conscience.

## Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent— The Scourging.

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 27-30.

1. When the Jews had shouted for Barabbas, and threatened Pilate to denounce him as disloyal to Rome if he released Jesus, the governor made one more attempt to save the life of Christ. He ordered Him to be severely scourged, hoping thereby to move the pity of the Jews. Vain attempt at a fresh compromise with his conscience! Pilate only involved himself in deeper guilt, and Christ in a greater agony of suffering. Nothing ever succeeds except a bold, fearless obedience to God's holy inspirations.

2. Our Lord is handed over to the scourgers, who strip Him naked and then begin their impious barbarity. The Pharisees are said to have plied them with drink to make them more reckless in their cruelty. Blow succeeds blow from those many-lashed, iron-pointed scourges. First His sacred flesh becomes red and swollen under the stripes, then the blood begins to flow, then the iron points lacerate and tear His delicate body until it is one great wound. Listen as He piteously moans under the anguish! See Him masked in blood! O my Jesus, what must be Thy love to endure this for me!

3. At length the executioners cut the cords, and Christ falls heavily in a pool of His own blood. What has brought the King of heaven to this condition of abject misery? It is the sins of men, especially the sinful indulgence of the body. It was to atone for sins of luxury and impurity and drunkenness that the spotless Lamb of God was thus tortured. Alas! how often have I been indulgent to my body! How have I yielded to the cravings of sense!



**Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—  
The Crowning with Thorns.**

Read St. Mark xv. 16, 17.

1. Our Lord was covered with a scarlet cloak and crowned with thorns, as a travesty or caricature of worldly honor. He desired to exhibit it in its true light. The farce played by the soldiers was in truth no farce, but a reality. It was intended to show how empty and contemptible is all earthly glory. It is worth no more than the mock-respect of the ruffians who bowed the knee by way of insult to Jesus. O Lord, by that mockery of honor Thou didst undergo, grant that I may esteem human honor at its true value.

2. Watch the soldiers at their cruel sport. The crown upon the head of Jesus is plaited of briars, whose long thorns pierce His sacred forehead as they press it down upon Him; the drops of blood and mingled tears blind His eyes. One by one they pass before Him and bow the knee, and then—oh, shame! they spit in His sacred face, that face before which angels and archangels fall in prostrate homage. O Lord, in return for those insults Thou didst endure, I will always bow before Thee in the Blessed Sacrament with reverent love and adoration; I will seek to wipe the drops of blood from Thine eyes by denying myself the free indulgence of my senses even in lawful things.

3. What were the sins for which Christ specially atoned in the crowning with thorns? Evil thoughts and imaginations, uncharitable thoughts, proud thoughts, impure thoughts. It was these rather than the thorns which pierced His sacred head, and filled His eyes with tears of sorrow and of blood.

## Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—Ecce Homo.

Read St. John xix. 4-6.

1. The scourging and crowning with thorns have brought the Son of God to a condition pitiable to contemplate. We have seen Him, and there is no sightliness in Him that we should desire Him. Pity, contempt, horror, disgust, indignation, are mingled in the hearts of those who behold Him. He is indeed a worm and not a man. He, the fairest among ten thousand! He, the sinless Lamb of God! Oh, how frightful must sin be if it can work such havoc even in the sacred person of the Son of God!

2. The sin that did this work, moreover, was the sin of others, not His own. It was something external to Him. He took it indeed upon Himself. He was made sin for us, but sin was never His own as it was ours. If it could so disfigure and degrade the sinless Lamb of God when laid upon Him from without, what must be the disfigurement and degradation sin works in us, springing up as it does out of ourselves, being a part of our sinful nature producing its natural fruits?

3. But was the Son of God really degraded by all these consequences of sin? On the contrary, His sacred humanity had never been so glorious or so worthy of honor as it was then. If He was unsightly before men, in the eyes of His Eternal Father He was crowned with honor and glory. There is nothing so pleasing to God as voluntary self-abasement and humiliation, nothing that brings so rich a recompense. How foolish then am I when I seek to avoid humiliation, and hate to be made like to the Son of God by suffering contempt and reproach from others!

**Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—  
The Condemnation to Death.**

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 24-26.

1. Pilate tries first one plan, then another, to avoid passing a sentence which he knew to be unjust. One plan after another fails, and now he is brought face to face with a choice on which the salvation of his soul may well depend. It was the turning-point in his life: the grace of God urging him on one side, and on the other the fear of man. So in the life of each there is some turning-point, some occasion when the choice made will decide his future both in life and in eternity. Unhappy those who in such a moment choose as Pilate chose!

2. The motive that led Pilate to condemn Jesus was the fear of man. He did not dare to face the consequences of doing his duty. He trembled before the opinion of others and the dread of losing his worldly position and honor. To how many has the same motive been a cause of eternal loss! Is it not one before which I have sometimes quailed, loving honor from men, and failing in what I knew was the will of God from a desire to please others?

3. Pilate ordered the sentence to be written out condemning Jesus to death, and then deliberately signed it. But first he washed his hands before the people, declaring himself guiltless of the blood of the just man that he condemned. O fruitless ceremony! He could not wash from his soul the black stain of cowardice and of treachery to his conscience. It is no use doing ill and saying we did not mean it. Such an evasion, like Pilate's protest, rather adds to than diminishes the sin.

## The Fifth Sunday in Lent—Jesus Sets Out on the Way to Calvary.

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 31.

1. It was not really Pilate who condemned Jesus to death, says St. Bernard, it was His love for us. He had been longing all His life through for that moment when He was to carry out His Father's will and redeem the world by dying for us. He knew that the divine mandate had gone forth that without shedding of blood there would be no remission. The voice of Pilate, sentencing Him to death, was but the expression of His own love for sinners, and of His joyful acceptance of the cross for their sake. O Jesus, may I love Thee in return for such love for me!

2. The cross has been prepared beforehand, and as soon as the sentence has been passed they bring it forward to be laid upon the shoulders of their Victim. Jesus takes the cross, and kisses the instrument of His Agony as a welcome friend. He did this not merely because He loved us and therefore loved the cross, but to teach us to love our crosses, to accept them as gifts from God to be welcomed, not to be rejected or regarded with aversion and dislike. How can we dislike them when they make us like to Jesus, and must be borne after Him if we are ever to share His joy in heaven?

3. On the shoulder of Jesus was a large, open wound, scarcely covered by the garments thrown upon Him. The weight of the cross rested on this wound, causing Him the most exquisite agony. It was by this that He was earning for us patience under our bodily sufferings. However keen, they are nothing to what the Son of God endured on His road to Calvary. Jesus, grant me patience under my sufferings.

**Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—  
Via Dolorosa.**

Read St. Luke xxiii. 27-31.

1. Torn and bleeding, scarcely able to sustain the heavy burden of the cross, with His long garment entangling His feet, dragged on by the brutal soldiery, Jesus treads the sacred way of the cross. After going a few steps He stumbles and falls; rising with difficulty, He totters on a short distance farther and falls again. O my Lord and my God, I beseech Thee by these Thy most painful falls, grant that I may never again fall into deliberate sin.

2. On the way some women express their grief and compassion with Jesus. His appearance is so pitiable that they cannot restrain their tears. Jesus turns to them, tells them to weep not for Him, but for themselves and for their children. If sin has wrought such a work of destruction in the Son of God, in Whom evil had nothing to lay hold of, in Whom the green wood could be blackened externally but not consumed by the flame, what would be its effects on sinners in whom the fire of sin rages as in the dry tinder? How ought I to fear the least spark of sin which may kindle in me the fire of passion and destroy me utterly!

3. One of those holy women, named Veronica, with a handkerchief wipes from His face the blood and sweat. On looking at the handkerchief she sees the impression of His sacred countenance stamped upon it. So upon the hearts of all who do acts of kindness for Christ's sake there is imprinted His likeness. Each deed of charity tends to produce in our soul that likeness to Him in which all holiness consists.

**Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—Jesus  
Meets His Holy Mother.**

Read St. Matthew xvi. 24-28.

1. Our blessed Lady, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, goes forth to meet her Son as He drags Himself up the hill of Calvary. With what horror and dismay must she have been stricken through at the sight of her darling Son and her God, His divine beauty obliterated, mangled and torn, covered with blood and filth, unsightly and terrible to behold! Heart broken anguish fills her soul, and we may well believe that she would have died of sorrow had she not been miraculously supported by the power of God. O Mother of God! obtain for me a share in Thy grief and Thy intercession!

2. What a fresh pang of sorrow to the gentle heart of Jesus to see His holy Mother, pale and haggard, come to share in His sacred Passion by her compassion! None so full of sympathy as He, none so full of acute feeling for the woes of others. If He compassionated the women on the way, how much more His own Mother, whom He loved far better than all the world beside! O Mary, obtain for me, a sinner, the sacred compassion of Jesus!

3. Our Lady shared in the Passion of Christ in a way in which none else could,—none even of the saints,—simply because she was sinless. She had not to suffer for herself. She had no sin to expiate. This it is which justifies us in giving her the title of co-Redemptrix. She too, who knew no sin, was made sin for us. This earned for her the privilege of sharing in all the agony of the sinless Lamb of God.

**Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—  
Simon of Cyrene.**

Read St. Mark xv. 21.

1. Our blessed Lord falls again and again beneath the weight of the cross, until it becomes evident to the soldiers that He will never be able to drag it to the place of execution. They accordingly lay hold of a heathen passing by, Simon the Cyrenian, and him they compel to carry the cross. How little Simon knew the happiness in store for him when those rough soldiers seize him and force him to the ignominious task of carrying for a public criminal the instrument of his punishment! How often we too fail to recognize in the sudden disagreeables and contradictions we encounter God's wonderful designs of mercy to us!

2. Simon at first bore the cross surlily and reluctantly, chafing under the hardship inflicted on him. But as he carries it, somehow an unaccountable change comes over him. It has the virtue to change his heart, and to make of him a devoted follower of the Crucified, one of the pillars of the Apostolic Church. Thus many a cross that we carry reluctantly turns out to be really the means of our sanctification and salvation.

3. Before Simon arrives at the summit of Calvary, the cross has endeared itself to him. He has recognized that to carry it for Jesus was no hardship, but a privilege and a happiness. So too the saints learn to love the cross, to embrace it, to seek it, to carry it with all joy, to be almost discontented if they are without it. This is the very height of peace and felicity; for those who find their joy in the cross find everywhere around them cause for rejoicing.

**Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—  
Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.**

Read St. Luke xxiii. 32-34.

1. Arrived at the summit of Calvary, our Divine Saviour is roughly stripped of His garments and exposed to the rude gaze of the scoffing multitude. This shame He endured to atone for our most shameful deeds, for our human respect, for our glorying in our shame, for our boasting and love of display before the eyes of men. Yet when we see the King of Glory thus exposed to shame, will not shame be far dearer to us than the empty honors that men bestow?

2. The executioners then seize Jesus and lay Him down upon the cross. Holes have been bored in the wood at the extremities of the cross-piece and in the lower part of the stem, and Our Lord's sacred limbs are almost dislocated by being dragged until the hands and feet reach the parts that have been pierced. Then the long, sharp nails are held by one of the soldiers, while another with a hammer drives them in through the hands and feet of Jesus. The blows are struck; the blood gushes forth; while the Divine Victim moans piteously under the exquisite pain. O Jesus, grant me a heartfelt compassion with Thee in Thy sufferings.

3. When Our Lord is nailed to the cross, the soldiers raise it on high, and let the base of it fall into a hole dug in the ground. The shock renews afresh the agony of Jesus. No word is heard from His mouth, save one which He repeats again and again: "Father, forgive them!" Even then He was thinking of others, not of Himself. Was ever love like His? Why do I not love Him more in return?



## Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—The Deriding of Jesus.

Read St. Matthew xxvii. 39-44.

1. The sight of Jesus hanging on the cross, so far from melting the hearts of the Jews, only hardened them the more against Him. Instead of feeling pity, they rejoiced over their Victim, and insulted Him in His misery. When men deliberately refuse to listen to the voice of Jesus, they become quite insensible after a time to His claim on them. They think evil good, and good evil; they are given over to a reprobate mind. Even in little things those who do not obey the impulses of grace become deaf to its calls, or even feel a positive aversion for that which they once loved but have now rejected.

2. How apparently impotent to save Himself the King of Glory seems to be! But that weakness is true strength. It is by these outrages and insults, by this passive endurance of their jeers and gibes, that Christ Our Lord is doing the wondrous work of our Redemption, and earning graces for all those who suffer insult for Him, to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake.

3. But He is doing more than this. He is also preparing for His sacred humanity a glory corresponding to all this ignominy. Of Him it is true beyond all others that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Each taunt, each mocking word, was to earn the praise of the angels and saints to all eternity. Here is an encouragement for us! What matters it if men despise and insult us, if God approves? The just Judge will not forget in the day of account what we have suffered for Him.

## Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—The Good Thief.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 39-43.

1. Among those who mocked and derided Jesus were the two thieves crucified with Him. But very soon His unspeakable gentleness and meekness touched the heart of one of the two. First he ceased his words of insult, then he boldly reproved his companion and bore testimony to the innocence of Jesus, and to His authority as King and Lord. What a divine power there is in weakness! The sight of the uncomplaining patience of Christ convinced this robber that He was King of all the earth, and that He Who now was dying on the cross would soon reign forever and ever. "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom!"

2. Remember me! This was his simple prayer. But we know that it was enough. If Christ remembers us, all will be well. What we have to dread is lest He forget us by reason of our having forgotten Him. This prayer should often be on our lips: "O Lord, remember me! In the hour of temptation, remember me! When sorrow bears hard on me, remember me! In sickness and in my last agony, O Lord, remember me!"

3. Our Lord answers this prayer of the good thief with divine generosity. All his sins are forgiven him; and as soon as his agony is over, he is to be received into the company of the blest and to be with Christ in paradise. What a rich reward for his confession of Christ! What a glorious answer to his prayer that Christ will remember him!

## The Sixth Sunday in Lent—Jesus Commends His Disciples to His Holy Mother's Care.

Read St. John xix. 25-27.

1. Our Divine Saviour did not depart from those He loved without providing them with a Mother who should be their Consoler, their Protector, their Advocate with God. In the person of St. John, He intrusted them all to Mary's care. If He had simply been providing Mary with a home, He would first have addressed St. John and commended to him the pious task of sheltering the Mother of God. By speaking first to Mary, He showed that it was she who was to shelter all those who were desolate and in sorrow. St. John was the representative of all who love Jesus, when Jesus said to Mary respecting him, "Woman, behold thy son."

2. This was the occasion when Our Lady for a second time became a mother. The birth of her first-begotten Jesus cost her no pang of travail; the birth of her spiritual children, the sinful sons of men, brought to her unspeakable anguish. The Queen of heaven became the Queen of Dolors before she could earn the right to exercise over each of us a mother's fostering care. How we ought to value the privilege of being her children, when it cost Mary such unspeakable suffering!

3. When Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son," He asked Our Lady to regard us with a mother's love for His sake. Her love for Him was to be transferred to us, without, however, becoming one whit the less. She was to love us for Jesus' sake; to show her love for Him by loving us. With what perfect confidence can we go to Mary, who sees in each of us, in spite of our sins, the image of her Divine Son!

## **Monday in Holy Week—The Dereliction of Jesus on the Cross.**

Read St. Mark xv. 33-36.

1. Our Lord had for a long time been silent. A thick darkness had gathered; most of the spectators had departed in fear. The mocking Pharisees had been awed to silence. Few were left save the soldiers, St. John, and a faithful group of holy women. All at once a piercing cry from the Divine Sufferer breaks the silence, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" These words were an expression of the thick darkness which Our Lord had permitted to gather round His human soul, and to hide from Him as it were the face of His Eternal Father. This desolation was by far the greatest of all the unspeakable sufferings of the Son of God.

2. What was its cause? Nothing else but sin. He was made sin for us, and having thus identified Himself with the sins of men so far as was possible for the sinless Lamb of God, He allowed Himself to experience to the utmost degree that He could the awful misery which is the consequence of sin—the black, dark hopelessness (if the word is a lawful one) which results to the sinner whom God forsakes. This consequence of sin Jesus took upon Himself to save men from the eternal remorse and despair which otherwise would have been their lot.

3. This cry of Jesus is a model prayer for us in times of darkness and desolation. We sometimes feel as if God had forsaken us, and cry out in our misery and sore distress. We are always safe in echoing Jesus' words, and He Who hears us use them will remember His own dereliction and help us in ours.

## Tuesday in Holy Week—The Thirst upon the Cross.

Read St. John xix. 28, 29.

1. There is nothing that causes such agonizing thirst as loss of blood. The prayer of the wounded soldier upon the battle-field is always for a drink of water; he forgets all other pains in his burning thirst. What must have been the intolerable suffering of Our Lord, Whose sacred Body had been gradually drained of every drop of blood! All day long the blood had been flowing—at the scourging, on the way to Calvary, as He was dragged hither and thither, with the sharp cords cutting His wrists. And now upon the cross, as from hands and feet a stream bedewed the ground, fiercer and fiercer grew the burning, parching thirst which consumed Him. O my Jesus, was there none to quench that thirst endured for us?

2. Our Lord's thirst was to atone especially for the sins of intemperance and self-indulgence in drink. Every sin of drunkenness and excess or self-indulgence in our food and drink added to that thirst and made it still more intolerable. My God, forgive me any such offences, and help me to deny myself some lawful indulgence, that so I may atone for my sins and assuage in some degree that sacred thirst Thou didst endure for me.

3. There was, however, a deeper meaning in Our Lord's cry: "I thirst!" He was thirsting for the souls of sinners, thirsting for the love of ungrateful men, thirsting for *my* love. He thirsts for it still, that I may be more faithful to His grace. O my Jesus, help me to love Thee more!

## **Wednesday in Holy Week—The Death of Jesus.**

Read St. Luke xxiii. 45-48.

1. After Our Lord has hung in agony for three hours upon the cross, at last the time approaches when His deliverance is at hand. He has endured every possible form of suffering, bodily and mental. His body has been subjected to a physical torture far worse than the accumulated sufferings of the martyrs; His sacred soul has been rent asunder with an anguish and desolation more awful than any save the eternal anguish of hell. He has sacrificed His honor, His reputation; He has been esteemed a fool and a madman. Now there is only one sacrifice more that He can make to His Eternal Father for man—the sacrifice of His life. He is determined to give up all for us, to be obedient even to death.

2. What was it that caused the death of Our Lord? Not the executioners, not the Jews, not the agony of the cross; they were but instruments. It was sin. Sin had in it a malice sufficient even to rob of life God, Our Lord and King. What a strange mystery sin is! And how strange that we do not hate it more when we see its power to destroy!

3. The death of Jesus was no transient occurrence. He still mystically dies for us each day and each hour. When we receive holy Communion, we “show the death of the Lord till He come,” and, therefore, His sacred Passion and Death should be the chief subject of our thoughts whenever we approach the holy Table, and especially on the eve of the solemn day when He instituted the sacrament of His love.

## **Maundy Thursday—Jesus' Mystical Death in the Blessed Eucharist.**

Read St. John xix. 34-37.

1. Each time that holy Mass is said, the sacrifice of our blessed Lord upon the cross is represented in the sacrifice that takes place upon the altar. Thus, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, on the divine decree, continues to be slain mystically, and will continue as long as the world shall last. With such a sight before our eyes, how can we ever forget Him? how can we ever lose heart or despond with this abiding proof of His tender love before our eyes?

2. In the blood and water that flowed from Our Lord's side when pierced by the centurion's spear were represented the sacraments of the Church, the blood of Christ that extricates us in holy Communion, the water that cleanses our souls in baptism and penance. His Sacred Heart that was open then is open still; the rich stream of graces still continues; it has flowed even unto me. What countless graces I have received from the love that has been poured upon me from the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

3. The Sacred Host that we receive in holy Communion reminds us in many things of the dead body of Jesus as it hung upon the cross, all the glory hidden—no life to all appearance there; in the power of all to treat it as they choose; reduced to the lowest humiliation. Yet it is our God and our Lord, the object of the adoring love of angels and of men, He Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, Who condescends to be our Guest and the food of our souls. Meditate on the unspeakable love of Jesus sacrificed for us!

## **Good Friday—The Descent from the Cross.**

Read St. Mark xv. 38-46.

1. No sooner is the sacrifice consummated and the last drop of the precious blood shed from Our Lord's Sacred Heart, than all is changed. That lifeless body is now treated with the utmost respect and veneration. See how gently and carefully Joseph and Nicodemus wind linen bands around the limbs and lower it to the ground, reverently adoring that body which had only a few hours before been a laughing-stock and object of contempt. Henceforth no more ignominy, no more contempt, no more ill-usage, but the love and adoration of saints and angels to all eternity.

2. Our Lady receives the body of her Son. What were her thoughts as she gazes into the five wounds, and sees how from head to foot it is covered with gaping wounds and bruises, battered out of all shape by the cruelty of man? O Mother of Sorrows, great as an ocean is thy sorrow! What can be thy hatred of sin when thou seest what it has wrought in the divine beauty of thy spotless Son! What a mixture of agonized compassion and mournful sorrow, and hope and consolation, and gratitude and triumphant joy, fills thy sacred soul while thou lookest on the dead body of thy Son!

3. The day on which Jesus died is indeed well called Good Friday. It is the day when Jesus consummated His victory over sin and death. While we mourn over His sufferings and our sins which caused them, we must also rejoice exceedingly at the thought of Satan conquered and heaven opened, and millions of sinners cleansed from sin in His most precious Blood!



## **Easter Eve—The Entombment.**

Read St. Luke xxiii. 50-56.

1. When Our Lady's mournful task was finished, the body of Jesus was laid in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, there to remain until the hour of its joyful resurrection. Let us contemplate it as it lies there: disfigured by countless wounds and scars; so apparently helpless, yet none the less the joy of God and worthy of our highest adoration. Passive and cold and motionless, but soon to be radiant with the most dazzling beauty; dead, but living with a divine life. Learn from this (*a*) the glory of suffering; (*b*) the power of apparent helplessness when God is with us; (*c*) the beauty of passive obedience; (*d*) the true life of those who are dead to the world.

2. What was Our Lord doing while thus apparently inactive in the silent tomb? He was beginning His work of triumph, delivering countless souls from purgatory and from limbo, consoling the patriarchs and prophets, fulfilling His promise of paradise to the good thief, trampling on Satan and changing the kingdoms of this world into the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. So it is with us. When we seem useless and doing nothing, we are often really doing the greatest things for God.

3. The tomb where Christ is laid is to be the model of my soul when I receive holy Communion: silent from all din of earthly things, cleansed from all stain of sin by a good confession and firm resolution to amend, dedicated to Him alone, His sacred body embalmed by my love, and wrapped in the clean winding-sheet of purity of intention. Thus will His presence there be the pledge of my resurrection with Him.

**The Resurrection and Ascension  
of Jesus Christ.**

SHORT MEDITATIONS FROM EASTER TO THE  
ASCENSION.



## PREFACE.

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THESE Meditations are intended as a companion series to those already published on the Sacred Passion of Our Lord. The one subject, no less than the other, is full of consolation and encouragement—the Passion pointing us rather to the joy of being freed from the burden of sin, the Resurrection to the further happiness of being heirs to the glory of heaven. For, as Christ “died for our sins, so He rose again for our justification;” and His work was not complete until He had not only risen again, but ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us.

It is the hope of the author of these short meditations that they may help those who read them to rejoice with Jesus Christ in His glorious Resurrection and Ascension into heaven.



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## **1.—The Resurrection.**

Read I. Cor. xv. 20-25.

1. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the Sacred Soul of Jesus returned to quicken once more the body that lay lifeless in the tomb, and He rose again from the dead. It was but the commencement of the third day since His crucifixion; but His love for His sorrowing friends made Him abridge the time, that He might hasten to console them in their sorrow. He still has the same loving thoughtfulness for His friends. It is still His chief desire to make those happy who love Him.

2. His Sacred Body passed through the tomb noiselessly and without stirring the huge stone that had been placed there to make His resurrection impossible. Oh, foolish devices of men! how utterly futile against the will of God! In one moment He can burst every bond that human malice or human ingenuity can contrive! He that dwells in the heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them.

3. See Him glorious in His Divine Beauty, rising from the tomb! What unspeakable joy and happiness in that face, so lately marred by our sins, so lately pale, and sad, and sorrowful! Never was there joy on earth like that of Jesus when He rose again! I will rejoice with Him to-day, I will forget my own troubles and sorrows, and give myself to an unselfish joy in the Resurrection of my King and my God.



## **2.—The Appearance of Jesus to His Holy Mother.**

Read I. St. John iv. 15-19.

1. Our Lord's first visit was to His Holy Mother. It is not mentioned in Holy Scripture, because it stands to reason that He should first minister comfort to her who had before all else shared His sufferings. It would have been something quite unnatural if He had passed her over and given joy to some other heart before hers. Was He not united to her by a closer tie than any, save that alone of the Hypostatic Union? and had not her heart alone always beat in unison with His? The instinct of every Catholic echoes the saying of Ignatius that those indeed must be without understanding who suppose that on Easter morn any creature could be preferred to her.

2. How shall we paint the happiness of that meeting? For Mary, it was Paradise begun. That one moment was more than enough to make her forget all her sorrows. As each pang of His sacred suffering had echoed in her heart, so much more each pulsation of joy, each note of triumph. From that day forth, the remembrance of that meeting was ever present to her, lighting up all the rest of her life with a boundless joy.

3. What earned that happiness for Mary? Her perfect obedience. There was none who imitated the obedience of Jesus as Mary; and therefore the joy of Jesus, in His triumph, flowed unchecked into her Immaculate Heart. It is my disobedience to grace which makes me gloomy and downcast. If I am obedient, I too shall be full of peace and joy.

### 3.—The Holy Women on Their Way to the Sepulchre.

Read St. Mark xvi. 1-4.

1. All through the Sabbath day the holy women had been anxiously looking forward to the mournful pleasure of carrying to the sepulchre sweet spices and perfumes that they had prepared to embalm the Body of Jesus; and very early in the morning of the first day of the week they started on their pious errand. But, strange to say, it had never occurred to them that a huge stone closed the door of the tomb, sealed with an official seal and guarded by a picket of soldiers. This is one of the truest marks of love, it seems to forget all difficulties, to overleap all obstacles; it has a wonderful confidence that it will attain its object. Is this the character of my love to Christ? Am I confident that I shall overcome all those hindrances which now seem to bar my way to holiness?

2. On the road to the sepulchre, as the difficulty became close at hand, they were stricken with fear—"who shall roll us back the stone?" Yet on they went, nothing daunted, trusting God with implicit confidence, relying on His power to take away what seemed to be an insuperable obstacle. So, when dangers and difficulties threaten me, do I go straight on, trusting in the goodness of my God?

3. Their holy confidence was not disappointed: holy confidence never is disappointed. The more we trust God, the more marvels He will work for us. An angel had been sent to reward them for their persevering devotion by doing, with angelic hands, what was altogether beyond their power to perform. So now God will send an angel, if needful, to fulfil the desires of those who trust in Him.

#### 4.—The Holy Women at the Sepulchre.

Read St. Mark xvi. 4-7.

1. What must have been the joy of the holy women when they found that God had granted the desires of their heart, and rolled the huge stone away! It was one of those joyful surprises by which God delights to encourage faithful hearts. Just when all seems hopeless, He steps in, and every difficulty vanishes. If this is not my experience, it ought to be; and the only reason why it is not, is because I have been distrustful and despondent. Courage, faint heart! He is waiting to help thee.

2. But when they entered the tomb, what a surprise! Instead of the dead Body of Jesus, they found an angel, clothed in white, sitting at the right side of the tomb. They were utterly astonished. They had never understood the meaning of Our Lord's promise that He would rise again. What could have happened? Had His Body been carried away? Had God taken it up to heaven? If He had been restored to life, He was lost to them. Their hearts were filled with mingled hope and fear, joy and sorrow, astonishment and a bewildered sense of happiness.

3. The angel's words soon reassure them. "He is risen. He is not here. You shall soon see Him again. Go carry the joyful news to His disciples." Trembling with joy, they obey the command. No need of spices and ointment now. It is too good to be true,—He is risen! My Jesus delights to turn sorrow into joy.

## 5.—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Mary Magdalen.

Read St. Mark xvi. 9-12.

1. Of all the sinful children of men, Our Lord chose out St. Mary Magdalen for the special privilege of being the first to whom He should appear after His resurrection. What earned for her this privilege? It was one thing, and one only: it was her single-minded fidelity to Jesus Christ. This it is that He values; this it is that draws Him near to the faithful soul.

2. Had she always been faithful? No; in the past she had been a great sinner, given up to pride, luxury, impurity, so that it was literally true that seven devils had dwelt within her. But Jesus had called her, and she had listened to His voice; and speedily the seven devils were cast out, never more to return; and the place where they had dwelt was now occupied by the love of Jesus. O happy change! For me, too, sinner as I am, Jesus is ready to do the like.

3. But did He not shrink from such a sinner? Oh, no! He is the friend of sinners; their very sins draw Him to them; and the memory of all that He has done to save them from their misery is a link that binds Him to them in the bonds of close affection. What wonderful, what astonishing, mercy is this that Jesus shows to us poor sinners!

## 6.—Why Jesus appeared first to St. Mary Magdalen.

Read St. John xx. 11-19.

1. Had not many been faithful to Jesus besides St. Mary Magdalen? Why did He choose her before them all?—before St. John, before Mary of Salome, and the rest of the holy women? It was because of the persistency of her love. When St. John had looked into the empty sepulchre and returned, and when the other holy women had gone their way, Mary still stood at the sepulchre without, weeping for love of Him and sorrow at having lost Him. God loves this persistency. If we went on praying and weeping, we should attain all we ask.

2. Jesus also appeared first to Mary Magdalen because she loved Him with an affection that absorbed all the powers of her soul. When she saw the two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had been laid, she took no notice of them; and when they asked her why she wept, her only answer was: "Because they have taken away my Lord." This is the sort of love that Jesus values; this is the love He will recompense by His most liberal graces.

3. None of all those who loved Our Lord had shed so many tears as St. Mary Magdalen. She had wept often at the thought of her sins and her ingratitude; she had wept of pure love at the feet of Jesus; she had wept tears of bitter, heart-broken sorrow, as she knelt beneath the cross; she had wept continually during those three days while He was in the tomb; and now she wept still. Our Lord loves such tears—tears of penance, tears of compassion, and tears of love. I will then pray for this gift of holy tears.

## 7.—How Jesus appeared to St. Mary Magdalen.

Read St. John xx. 11-17.

1. While Mary knelt and wept she suddenly heard a sound behind her, and turning round she saw One standing there whom in her grief and amid her blinding tears she did not recognize. She thought Him to be the gardener of Joseph of Arimathea. So to all His servants Christ sometimes appears under strange forms. The poor old man who asks an alms, the orphan in distress, perhaps the churlish neighbor or trying companion who taxes our patience, are really representatives of Christ, though under strange forms.

2. But when Jesus speaks, when He calls her by her name, then at once she recognizes Him. It is the instinct of love recognizing the voice of the Beloved. One of the tests of love to Jesus is that we at once perceive when it is He that speaks. The ears of those who love Him not can scarcely discern between His voice and the sound of their own natural affections and desires : they have so often refused to listen, that they cease to hear. But His sheep know His voice, and those who love Him best are the quickest to catch every whisper of His grace.

3. Jesus calls her by her name—Mary. In Holy Scripture when God calls any by their name it means that they are to become what the name implies, and that God will give them the grace to do so. Abraham, Israel, Peter, the Holy Name itself, were such names. So Mary means that she who bears the name shares in the grace of her who was full of grace.

## **8.—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Peter.**

Read St. John xx. 3-10; St. Luke xxiv. 34.

1. The return of the holy women after their first journey to the tomb produced in the disciples of Our Lord, who were gathered in sorrow and fear in the guest-chamber, the greatest astonishment and dismay. When they told their story, most laughed at it as the offspring of women's imagination. It seemed to be an idle tale, and was not believed. Yet they had heard Our Lord announce in the plainest terms His Resurrection. How slow men are to believe! how unreasonably incredulous and reluctant to accept the Divine promises!

2. But two of those present did not share this kind of blind unbelief. St. Peter and St. John at once hasten to the sepulchre to see for themselves whether the women's words were true. First St. Peter and then St. John enter the sepulchre, see, and believe. On their return Our Lord appears to St. Peter. The chief of the apostles, the future Vicar of Christ, must needs receive the first honor from His Master. Our Lord bestows a special dignity and special privileges on those whom He invests with His own authority. How much, then, we ought to respect them!

3. But Our Lord also chose St. Peter for this honor first of the apostles, to re-assure him, to let him know that all was forgiven, that He loved him, in spite of his denial, as dearly as ever. So we need not fear lest our past sins be remembered, if now our hearts are full of love to Jesus.

## 9.—The Appearance of Jesus to the Holy Women.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 8-10.

1. After the holy women had delivered their message at the guest-chamber, they returned once more to the tomb, and saw once more the vision of angels. As they returned they saw another sight, which made them forget the angels and the splendor that had filled the empty tomb. Jesus Himself stood before them in His Divine beauty, with words of welcome. What unspeakable joy must have filled their souls—a joy which was an anticipation of the joy which will fill each faithful soul at the judgment, when Jesus welcomes it with the words “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

2. With a simultaneous instinct they fell upon the ground and adored with supreme adoration His glorified Humanity. They took hold of His sacred feet lest He should depart from them. He was to them no longer the prophet sent from God to ransom man. Now He was God Himself—God made man, and they feared lest He should return to heaven and they should see Him no more. So we should learn to value the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and after holy Communion. He is closer to us than to these holy women. Why do we not cling more to Him lest He leave us?

3. Jesus consoles their fears. “Fear not: I am not going to depart. You shall meet Me again in Galilee with the assembled disciples. Go tell them from Me to go thither; there they shall see Me.” What a privilege thus to be the messengers of Jesus! We, too, can be His messengers, His apostles to others, by carrying His messages of love and consolation to those in distress and misery.



## 10.—The Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 13-16.

1. On the same day two of the disciples, in their sorrow and disappointment, set off together to Emmaus, a little village some eight miles distant from Jerusalem. They did not act wisely in departing from the little community, and seeking thus to divert themselves from their sorrow. If they had remained at home, they would soon have heard the confirmation, first by one and then by another, of the women's joyful tidings. It is never well for one who is a member of any society, bound by religious ties, to act apart from the rest. Common action and common life carries its own blessing with it.

2. Yet their journey did not divert them from their sadness. One thought, and one only, occupied their minds—they could not shake off the remembrance of the crushing disappointment they had suffered in the death and burial out of sight of Him whom they had hoped was to be the Redeemer of His people. They could not think and talk of any subject but this as they mournfully walked along, side by side, to Emmaus.

3. This sorrow of theirs, this longing regret, was so pleasing to Our Lord that He was drawn by it to come and walk with them and console them on the very morning of the Resurrection. He sought the society of two ordinary disciples, and could not keep away from them, because they were thinking of Him. He is so grateful to those who remember Him! If we remember Him and love Him, He will be at our side though we know it not, ever ready to help and comfort us.

## II.—Jesus appears to the Two Disciples.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 16-19.

1. At the very time that these disciples were giving up all for lost and lamenting that their hopes were dashed to the ground forever, Jesus was close by them, drawing nearer to them at every step. So it is with us. Just when we are most down-hearted, and all seems black, and dark, and hopeless, He is close at hand, waiting to manifest Himself, with a long series of blessings to bestow upon us and consolations to cheer our hearts. A time of darkness is almost always a sign of light and joy hard by.

2. Jesus did not at once reveal Himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, but joined Himself to them under the guise of a stranger. Their eyes were held, that they should not know Him. Though they loved Him dearly, and sorrowed bitterly for His sufferings and death, yet their slowness to believe all that Christ had told them, and all that the prophets had foretold, threw a veil over their eyes. How many now, faithful servants of God, fail to realize the love of God and His presence with them, because they are stubborn and slow to believe!

3. Our Lord begins with asking them why they are sad. Did He not know? Yes, He knew well enough; but He likes us to tell Him our troubles. We do not do this half enough. He never tires of hearing of our sorrows, trials, difficulties, temptations. He is so pleased to listen!

## 12.—The Disciples tell Jesus Their Troubles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 19-24.

1. The disciples, moved by the kindly sympathy of the stranger who has joined Himself to them, tell Him what it is that makes them sad. It is all that they have seen done to Jesus—His condemnation to death and His crucifixion. If these disciples were but imperfect Christians, they had at least that love for Jesus, that devotion to Him, which is the mark of men of goodwill. They had rejoiced in His glorious deeds, and they had sorrowed bitterly in His sufferings and death, and now they are quite overwhelmed with grief at the thought that all His life and mission had ended in a miserable failure. All this was pleasing to Jesus, in spite of the weak faith it implied. It showed a genuine willingness and zeal in the good cause.

2. Notice how prudent these disciples are in what they say to the stranger: they do not call Him Jesus, or the Son of God, or the Messiah, or their Master and Lord; they simply describe Him as a prophet mighty in work and word. Here we learn great caution in speaking. We must not say that which is likely to be scoffed at; while we confess our faith, we must not expose it to the ridicule of unbelievers.

3. Yet they cannot conceal their disappointment from the stranger. *Speratamus!* we had hoped for so much. We had such lofty expectations. We thought a new day was to dawn upon us; and now— How often this is our experience! We, too, hoped for great things, and have been disappointed. But we must not despond. After all, these fears are vain—all is not lost.

### 13.—The Discourse of Jesus to the Disciples.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 22–27.

1. These disciples had so completely lost all hope that, instead of taking courage when the holy women had announced the vision of angels and the news of the Resurrection, they were only frightened by it. They took a gloomy view of what ought to have cheered and encouraged them; they were obstinate in their grief and disappointment. This it was that made them so hopeless: they refused to look at the bright side of things. This is generally the secret of utter hopelessness; there is something wilful in it. We should have more hope if we had more submission to the holy will of God.

2. When the disciples have finished the story, Jesus takes up the tale. He at once tells them the plain truth—that they are fools not to accept the women's story, not to believe all that was written respecting Christ in the prophets of old. There is no folly like incredulity. We have Christ's own word for it. Would that sceptics would take this to heart, instead of priding themselves on their fancied discernment.

3. Then He shows them that all these sufferings were the very proof that Jesus was the Messiah that the prophets one and all bear testimony to, the necessity of His first suffering and then entering into His glory. This is the Divine law for all the followers of Jesus—first suffering, and then glory. If I desire glory in heaven, I must not shrink from suffering now.

## 14.—The Effects of the Discourse of Jesus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 27-33.

1. As Jesus speaks, the hearts of the two disciples burn within them. Never had they heard such a discourse as this; never had they understood the meaning of the Scriptures, till they listened to the inspired words of this Divine Expositor. How could they have been so blind before as not to have recognized, in the sufferings and death of Jesus of Nazareth, the fulfilment of the prophecies? We, too, cannot understand Holy Scripture if we are left to ourselves; outside the Church, men read it, and find in it their own follies and fancies. It is only those who are taught of God who can ever read God's Word aright.

2. Why did the words of Jesus thus carry them out of themselves, so that the walk to Emmaus seemed all too short? It was because He who spoke was the Son of God; and there flowed into His words the grace of which His Sacred Heart was full. It is just the same with the servants of Christ, whether priests or ordinary Christians—their words move the hearts of others in proportion to their own holiness. How much more influence for good I should have if I were more holy!

3. There was another reason why Our Lord's words thus stirred the hearts of these two disciples. It was because they were men of goodwill. To such, the voice of God is sweet and attractive. "My sheep hear My voice," says Our Lord; "I know Mine, and Mine know Me." The enemies of God are repelled by His voice and the voice of His ministers and of His Church; they criticise, instead of listening in humility. What am I—a critic or a disciple?

## 15.—The Arrival at Emmaus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 28, 29

1. In the midst of the discourse, which had made them forget all else, they found themselves at their destination; and their Divine Companion made as though He would go farther. He let them think He was intending to leave them, in order to teach them, and through them to teach us, the necessity of persisting in prayer. Our Lord often lets us think that He is going to forsake us, or that He is unkind to us, or that He is not ready with help in time of need, in order to see whether we are in earnest in our desire to have Him for our companion and our friend, or whether we are ready to give Him up in the face of difficulties.

2. These two disciples will not hear of Jesus going farther. What do they not owe Him for that heavenly discourse that has turned their sorrow into joy! What would they not give to keep Him with them, and to listen to more of such words as His! They simply compel Him to remain with them, urging the motives that they regard as most likely to be effectual. This is what Jesus loves—that we should urge Him with constant importunity until we constrain Him to listen to our petitions.

3. We should each day invoke Our Lord with these words: Stay with us. Each morning when we wake, Stay with us through the day; in time of temptation or danger, Stay with us; in holy Communion, Stay with us with Thy Divine power; in the time of sickness and in the hour of death, Stay with us, O Lord Jesus!

## 16.—The Divine Guest.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 30-35

1. Jesus, unable to resist the importunity of these two faithful hearts, deigns to be their guest; after He has shared their meal He provides for them a heavenly banquet. For the second time He consecrates the Eucharistic Bread, and feeds His entertainers with the sacred food of His own Body and Blood. Then at length their eyes are opened, and in the reception of the Divine mysteries they recognize that He who worked the marvel is none else than the Lamb that had been slain; the Great Prophet whom they had loved, but had not known; Christ, their Lord, their Creator, and their King.

2. To open the eyes is one of the effects of a good Communion. When I receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ I should make use of the happy moment to ask His advice, to consult Him on my difficulties, to pray for more light, to beg that self-love and obstinacy of will and pertinacity of judgment may not blind my eyes. Why do I not make more of the brief time during which He is my guest, and is therefore bound to listen to me?

3. No sooner had the two disciples received holy Communion and made an act of faith in the Divinity of Jesus than He vanishes from their sight. How their hearts burn with joy, and peace, and gratitude, and love, and devotion! How could they have ever doubted! Oh, what happiness is theirs as they hasten back to Jerusalem to communicate the joyful news to those whom they had left in sorrow and distress!

## 17.—The Appearance of Jesus to the assembled Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 33-36.

1. When the two disciples arrived at Jerusalem they found the doors of the house where the apostles were, barred and bolted for fear of the Jews. When they have gained admission they see a very different state of things from the sorrow and despondency of the morning. All are full of a trembling excitement: Christ has appeared, not merely to the women, but to Peter himself. Yet most of them scarcely dare to hope for such joy; and in spite of this confirmation by the new-comers, some are still incredulous. So men are naturally incredulous of some great happiness; and for this reason men of goodwill are naturally the slowest to believe until some light from heaven enlightens them, or facts afford evidence that cannot be disputed.

2. While the assembled apostles are discussing the news, suddenly Jesus Himself appears in their midst. The doors are still fastened; but now He has broken the bonds of earth, and stands before them in the glorious beauty of His risen Body. So He comes suddenly and unexpectedly to those who love Him and long for Him: no obstacles can keep Him away; no intervening ties can separate Jesus from the souls that are dear to Him and He to them.

3. Jesus came to His apostles when the doors were shut. The cares, and troubles, and dangers of the world were shut out. This is the only means of drawing Christ to us. He does not make His voice heard amid the world's din. We must shut the doors of our senses if Christ is to come and be our Guest.



## 18.—The First Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 30-39.

1. It was late when Jesus appeared to the apostles. Not in the early morning as to St. Mary Magdalen, not in the midday as to St. Peter, but in the evening. Why was this? It was because the apostles had forsaken Him in the hour of need. They all fled in the Garden of Gethsemani. Only St. Peter and St. John had followed to the house of Caiphas; all the rest had been timorous and faint-hearted. They had forfeited the privilege that the faithful company of the holy women had secured of beholding their Master early in the day. Jesus treats us as we treat Him; love begets love. Every act of love done for Him earns a generous reward in this life, and also in the next. If we neglect Him, we must expect Him to neglect us.

2. Yet they had not forgotten Him. Their hearts were full of love to Him, and it was for Him that they were now suffering; it was on account of Him that they had been sad during this mournful triduum spent in the solitude of the guest-chamber. He therefore would not let the sun go down without coming to console them. He is so grateful for every thought of Him, and so ready to forget every unkindness.

3. At first they did not recognize Him. It could not be a human body which had thus passed through the closed doors. They supposed that they saw a spirit, or a phantom of their Master. Men will not believe in the wonders that the love of Jesus is ready to work for those who love Him. He is ready to do for us far greater wonders than He wrought for His apostles. He is ready to break down all the barriers that sloth and idleness and sin have raised in our souls.

## 19.—The Words of Jesus to His Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 38-45.

1. Jesus does not like to see His friends in fear, and troubled at His presence, on the very day of His resurrection; and with cheering words He hastens to re-assure them: "Peace be to you: it is I; fear not. Why are you troubled? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." He seems almost pained at their inability to realize that it is He Himself. How He desires confidence from us! That we should recognize Him, trust Him, feel at home with Him. He does not like us to be afraid of Him: He likes to be treated by us with a sort of reverent familiarity as our dearest Friend, our Brother, the Lover of our souls.

2. How soothing His words are: "Peace be to you"! This is His first greeting to His apostles after He has fought the battle and conquered. He knew the necessity of peace as an element, or rather as the foundation, of holiness. The troubled soul cannot reflect the image of God. As long as there is strife within, we shall never overcome our enemies or do good service to the Captain of our salvation. Pray then for peace. *Dona nobis pacem!* Give us true peace. *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.*

3. What He especially desired to impress upon them was that He was the same Jesus who had been their companion during the three years of His ministry, and who had been scourged and crucified. They seemed to imagine He was a different Being, and that now He would lose all sympathy with them. Is not this often our danger? We scarcely believe that Jesus in heaven has the same compassionate, gentle heart as when He was on earth.

## 20.—Jesus shows His Sacred Hands and Feet.

Read St. John xx. 19, 20.

1. When Our Lord appeared after the Resurrection His sacred hands and feet and side still bore the wounds made by the nails and spear. They were like no other wounds: they in no way disfigured His Sacred Body; on the contrary, they shone like jewels of dazzling brilliancy. So, too, the martyrs of Jesus will to all eternity be decorated with each wound they suffered on earth, as with an ornament; and all who have mortified their bodies for His sake will have an additional beauty in body and soul alike in heaven.

2. Our Lord was not ashamed of these marks of His humiliation, of His shame and outrage and degradation. He rejoiced in them. They were the scars in the battle by which He had won Heaven for His elect; the trophies of victory over sin and Satan. We cannot win the battle without humiliation, shame, and bearing His reproach. How we ought to rejoice when we are thought worthy to share in any way His sufferings, knowing that we shall thereby earn a share in His triumph!

3. Our Lord points out to His apostles these proofs that it is He Himself, Jesus of Nazareth, in no way changed. He goes still further, and to convince them of His human nature He asks for some food, and eats before them. He shows a wonderful condescension for their weakness and their incredulity. He is determined to put them at their ease, and leaves no means untried to win their confidence and love. In much the same way He has treated me and won me in spite of myself.

## 21.—The Mission of the Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 20-23.

1. Our Lord had come not merely to bring peace to His apostles and to fill their hearts with lightness and with joy; this supernatural happiness was intended only as the prelude to the work He was going to entrust to them. First peace for themselves and after that they were to go forth as the messengers of peace to others. First a firm faith for themselves, and then they were to carry that faith to others. We shall never do much to benefit the souls of others until we have ourselves put into practice the counsels that we give to others.

2. In these words: "As My Father sent Me, I also send you," Jesus gave to His apostles their future mission and the powers necessary thereto. What are these powers? They are no other than those that the Eternal Father had bestowed upon His Divine Son. As He was invested in His Sacred Humanity with graces unlimited flowing into it from His Divine nature, so His apostles are to have graces and gifts innumerable. What a respect and reverence we ought to have for priests, since they are the vicegerents of Jesus Christ Himself.

3. If priests thus receive graces corresponding to those bestowed on the Son of God, they have corresponding responsibilities. They must obey as Christ obeyed, they must be servants of all as Christ was, they must be willing to sacrifice themselves as Christ sacrificed Himself; and not priests only, but all who aspire to be apostles must remember that their model and type in dealing with those to whom they minister was He who was meek and humble of heart, who came not to do His own will, but the will of God.

## 22.—The Powers bestowed on the Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 23.

1. Jesus now proceeded to bestow upon the apostles first the power to be apostles and then priests, and the privilege of offering the Holy Sacrifice. The latter had indeed been given at the Last Supper in the words "Do this in remembrance of Me." Now it is confirmed in the words, "As My Father sent Me, so I send you." Christ was sent to offer a Propitiatory Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The apostles were sent to offer the same sacrifice—to carry on to the end of time in themselves and their successors the Sacrifice of Calvary.

2. Besides this, it also included the power to forgive sins. The Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins—not only to declare the sinner loosed from his sins, but to loose him. So, too, every priest of God has power to loose from sin in the Sacrament of Penance. How many a sinner knows by experience the consoling influence of the sacrament so justly called the Sacrament of Consolation! How many a broken heart has there found relief from a sorrow that was too hard for human heart to bear! Thank God for it with all your heart

3. Our Lord in conferring these apostolic and priestly powers breathed upon His apostles, as the sign that He was bestowing upon them the same Spirit that had breathed in Him. The Spirit of God was upon Him to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives. The same spirit breathes now throughout the Catholic Church, not in her priests alone, but in all her children who seek to carry on the work of Jesus. On all there rests the same Holy Spirit, giving life and power to their prayers, their words, their deeds.

### 23.—The Second Appearance of Jesus to the assembled Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 24-29.

1. One of the apostles, St. Thomas, had been absent when Jesus first appeared to them. When the rest announced the visit of their Master, Thomas would not believe them: he stood out against their consentient voice, and declared that he would remain incredulous till he had actually put his finger into the sacred wounds of Our Lord's hands and feet, and thrust his hand into His side. Men fancy that in early days the followers of Christ were ready to accept every marvel without question, but what modern sceptic could be more sceptical than Thomas? He had heard the ancient prophecies, the repeated predictions of Our Lord, the united testimony of the apostles, yet he would not believe. Pray for a loyal readiness to believe.

2. Our Lord had waited eight days before again visiting His apostles. He was preparing them for His final departure from them—training them to remember Him whom they saw not; to love Him none the less because He was absent from them. This is always a great mark of affection—to bear in mind a friend in his absence. Do I thus remember Him from one Communion to another, the one preparing for the other, and its sweet memory lasting on in my heart?

3. When Our Lord had greeted His apostles He called St. Thomas to Him and told him to touch His hands and feet and side, and thus learn to believe. What wonderful condescension! God does not generally let men dictate their conditions of belief. But Jesus, though now triumphant, is still full of compassion, meek and gentle of heart, patient, forbearing, and forgiving.

## 24.—St. Thomas's Profession of Faith.

Read St. John xx. 28-30.

1. When St. Thomas heard the voice of Jesus and saw Him with his eyes he needed no further confirmation of his faith. Humbly he falls upon his knees and acknowledges the Divine Visitor to be indeed his Lord and his God! What a grace the presence of Jesus brings with it. All the obstinacy and incredulity of St. Thomas vanishes at once under that holy influence. So, too, in holy Communion Jesus often gives the same grace. Difficulties and obstacles to our advance in virtue fade away, and, what is more, our own scepticism and hardness melt under His sacred presence.

2. "My Lord and my God!" In these words there is a very clear testimony to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is an expression we should often repeat to Him. Before the Blessed Sacrament we should cry again and again, "My Lord and my God!" If doubts against faith trouble us, we should repeat these words with all the energy we can command. Above all, when we receive holy Communion we should cry out to our Divine Guest, "My God and my Lord!"

3. Our Lord's answer to St. Thomas's act of faith was to remind him that there was a far higher faith than his. St. Thomas's faith was of that lower kind that will only believe when the senses bear witness to some invisible power of God working in the visible world; but the higher and nobler faith believes in the testimony of God, and despises the evidence of sense. Pray that you may have a lively faith in things you see not, and that you may not be slow to believe.

## 25.—The Fishing of the Apostles.

Read St. John xxi. 1-4.

1. After the second appearance to the apostles, Our Lord did not for some time again manifest Himself to them. During this interval they did not remain idle. Under Peter's guidance, they go up to the Lake of Tiberias, and once more fetch out their nets and set out to fish in the lake. After all their gifts and privileges, the supernatural powers intrusted to them, the places of dignity assigned them in the Church, they did not regard it as beneath them to undertake once more their humble craft. This is a great sign of grace—when high dignity does not lead a man to think great things of himself, but rather to love a humble occupation.

2. St. Peter naturally takes the lead. His fall has left no trace of discouragement: he does not allow it to palsy his actions; there is no morbid deprecation and reproach of self, now he has learnt not to think about self, but about what Christ would wish him to do. The other apostles, too, follow him with simple and docile readiness. His denial of Christ has left no trace upon their minds. This is what pleases God—that the sinner, when once he has made a good act of contrition, should behave as if he had never fallen. When he does this, God takes away from the minds of others the remembrance of his fall.

3. All night long the apostles take nothing. Long ago Our Lord had promised them that henceforth they should be fishers of men; and their long disappointment in their craft seemed to foreshadow that they must expect many such disappointments in seeking to bring into the net of Christ the souls of men. We, too, must expect often to fail; we must not give up when we seem to labor in vain.



## 26.—The Appearance of Jesus at the Lake

Read St. John xxi. 4-6.

1. As the day began to dawn, the apostles looked up and espied a figure standing upon the shore of the lake, in which they were wearily dragging their nets. Who could this stranger be? He accosts them, and asks whether they have any fish in their boat; and they sadly answer: No! In spite of all our toil we find no results. How often we seem, in our prayers, our work for God and for the souls of others, to obtain no results! All the time seems wasted; nothing to show for it, nothing but fruitless labor and constant failures.

2. The stranger calls again to them: "Cast your nets on the right side of the ship, and you shall find." The apostles, with the instinct of obedience, at once follow His directions, and their obedience brings, as its result, a plentiful haul of fish. It is always better to take the advice of another than to follow our own devices; the very fact of submission brings a blessing with it. He who follows the counsel of another, especially if his adviser has any position of authority, shows true prudence, and earns the blessing of God upon his work.

3. This unexpected and marvellous success at once suggests to St. John that the stranger can be none other than Jesus. St. John was pure in heart. He did all with a pure intention; and His Master was ever present to his thoughts. This was the reason why he recognized Him so quickly. It is a great mark of love for Jesus if every piece of good fortune reveals Him to us; if we see Him in all, and recognize Him as the author of all the success to which we attain.

## 27.—St. Peter Hastens to Jesus.

Read St. John xxi. 7.

1. When St. John's instinct of love had recognized his Master, St. Peter's impulse of love prompted him to throw himself into the sea and hasten to His feet. Through the waves and troubled waters, he made his way boldly to the shore where Jesus was calling him. So through the waves and troubled waters of life, the soul that loves Jesus makes its way to Him, following His call, even though it may lead through the waves of sorrow and amid the storms of temptation. He who fixes his eye on Jesus, and thinks only of coming nearer to Him, is always safe.

2. How different is St. Peter's action now from the spirit he formerly displayed! On the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes he cried, "Depart from me; I am a sinful man." Now he hastens to Jesus. What has worked the change? Then he was honest, brave, faithful, but full of self; now his humiliation had cast out self-love, and, instead of thinking of his own sins, he thinks only of Jesus. This is what Jesus loves—that we should forget ourselves, and think only of Him.

3. St. Peter casts about him the coat of the fisherman—the symbol of the authority of the supreme Pontiff. The official documents of the Holy Father are given under the seal of the Fisherman. None except those who wear the livery of the Fisherman are recognized by Jesus as fishers of men, or can expect the grace and help necessary for the conversion of souls. This is why the sermons, missions, Bible-readings outside the Church are so devoid of any influence for good; they are not stamped with the seal of the Fisherman, and so are sure to fail. I must thank God that I live a servant and a follower of the Fisherman.

## 28.—The Easter Banquet.

Read St. John xxi. 9-13.

1. When the apostles had brought their boat to land with the splendid haul of fish which they had taken, they found that Jesus had already made preparations for them. He had kindled a fire, and laid fish thereon, and provided bread. They bring the fish they had taken, broil some of them, and then Jesus and His disciples sit around the fire, and in the peaceful quiet of the shores of the lake they eat together their Paschal meal. What a happy feast must that have been! No banquet in the palace of kings half so joyful!—their hearts intoxicated, not with wine, but with the inebriating delights of companionship with Jesus, and drinking in His sacred words with a rapture like that of Paradise.

2. This time they knew well, one and all, that it was Jesus who was with them. The success of their fishing had suggested that it was He; the overflowing joy of their hearts testified to His presence. Even if their eyes had failed to bear witness to His being their Lord, still they would not have doubted. The time of unbelief and hardness of heart was over. Now they had entered on their inheritance of undoubting faith, that He whom they now saw in the beauty of His Sacred Humanity was the same Jesus who suffered and died on the cross. How happy it is for us when God gives this intimate assurance of Jesus' presence!

3. In Holy Mass, we are as certain that Jesus is present, as the apostles were by the Lake of Tiberias. Every Catholic knows that it is the Lord who has come to feed us—nay, to be Himself the food of our souls. Should not our hearts then burn within us at every Mass if we really appreciate the fact of His Divine Presence?

## 29.—The Questioning of St. Peter.

Read St. John xxi. 15-17.

1. After they had dined, Our Lord addressed to St. Peter a question which was to introduce the conferring upon him of that power which is the central doctrine of Catholic Christianity. He asked him, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" This was the necessary question to put to one who was to be the Vicar of Christ. As his station was to be the most lofty in the Christian Church, so Christ expected of him a love beyond all the rest. How important it is for us to remember that every sort of authority requires a higher personal standard on our part. Priests, parents, masters, employers, each in his or her degree, ought to love more, in order to be fit for the position in which God has placed them.

2. Peter did not venture to say that he loved more than the rest, but modestly answered, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." These words came from the bottom of his heart; he had always loved Our Lord fondly and faithfully; even in his denial he still loved Him in his heart. I, too, who have so often fallen, yet will say to Jesus, over and over again, with repeated earnestness, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Especially, as I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, I will address Him, corporeally present there, and protest constantly, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

3. In return for his love, and as the best means of proving it, Jesus bids His apostle, "Feed My lambs," or, more literally, "Be shepherd of My lambs." This is the greatest privilege Christ can bestow—to intrust to any, in whatever capacity, the care of the souls of others. How have I fulfilled His trust? Have I fed His lambs with tender care?

### 30.—The Charge to St. Peter.

Read St. John xxi. 17.

1. A second and a third time Jesus puts the same question to St. Peter: "Lovest thou Me?" How anxious He is for our love! This is one of the mysteries of the love of Jesus, that He actually longs that I should love Him, and is athirst for my love. What wonderful condescension for the King of kings to be eager for the affection of a poor worm like me! Yet so it is. I must take Him at His word, and give Him all the love of my heart to satisfy His Divine love for me.

2. Each time in answer to Peter's reply Jesus again confirms his appointment made long before, to be the first Pastor of the flock of Christ. Note that He says each time, "Feed *My* lambs, feed *My* sheep." They are not Peter's, but Christ's. So we must remember that if we are in any authority, our subjects are not ours, but Christ's; our children, servants, pupils, are His, and to Him we shall have to give account for our treatment of them.

3. The third time that St. Peter was asked the question he was grieved. The triple question reminded him of his triple denial of Jesus, and besides it seemed as if Jesus doubted his love. But it was not so. Jesus saw into his heart and knew the love that burned there: He desired to elicit from St. Peter a fresh declaration of his love. Christ is pleased to hear us repeat again and again the protestations of our love: "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee."

### 31.—The Appearance of Jesus in Galilee.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 16-18.

1. Jesus had summoned the apostles by the mouth of the holy women to repair to Galilee, and had promised to meet them there; and in accordance with His promise He appeared to them in the place and at the time that He had appointed. Why did He make them travel to the mountains far away, when He might just as easily have appeared to them at Jerusalem? It was to teach them obedience, and to teach us the same. Our Lord seems to impose arbitrary commands on us, to lead us by strange paths; because it is important before all else that we should be trained in blind obedience and in the renunciation of our own will and judgment, which are so sure to lead us astray.

2. Some had doubted before when He first appeared, but now one and all believed. They had learned their lesson at last. Even the sceptic Thomas was now fully convinced, he had made his act of faith and submission when he cried, "My Lord and my God!" Now as soon as Christ appeared they all adored Him. Now it was a real joy to them to fall prostrate at His feet and offer Him supreme homage. So now when the bell rings and He is present on the altar it should be the source of joy to us.

3. Jesus confirms and rewards their faith by a declaration of His Omnipotence. To Him as man is given universal dominion. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He, our Lord and our God, has all power in heaven and earth. Why then should we fear?—why do we not trust Him as we ought?

### **32.—The Scene upon the Mount in Galilee.**

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 16.

1. Let us picture the scene on the mountain in Galilee—Thabor it may be, or some other mountain not far from the Lake of Tiberias; a number of persons are making their way thither over the hills around, in groups of two and three, until they arrive at the summit of the mount. There they gather in a circle and wait, as if expecting some one to come and take His place in their midst. There we notice St. Peter taking the lead as their appointed head, St. John rapt in silent contemplation, St. James kneeling in prayer by his side, St. Thomas making acts of faith, Nathaniel with his guileless soul full of joyful expectancy. All at once in the centre of the group another figure is seen—one like to the Son of man, in the beauty and majesty of His glorified Humanity, but with the glory still subdued, lest mortal eyes should be dazzled by its brilliancy.

2. At once they all fall upon their faces and adore Him, paying Him supreme homage as their Lord and God. What overflowing happiness fills their hearts! It is heaven begun. Jesus our Master! Jesus our Lord! Jesus our Saviour! Jesus our God! How their hearts go out to Him. Then He bids them rise, and looks round with sweet looks of love on each and all.

3. Then He speaks to them. No music ever so sweet as the sound of His voice. To listen to Jesus is supreme happiness for them. Each word thrills through their souls; they treasure them up as jewels. So come and speak to us, O Lord, thy unworthy disciples, who desire to have Thee always with us, and hear Thy voice.

### 33.—The Apostolic Commission.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

1. Our Lord's all-embracing power was not given to Him for Himself alone, or merely that He might crush His enemies under His feet. As He had taken human flesh for our sakes, for our sakes had been crucified and risen again, so for our sakes all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth. It is that he might through His apostles and their successors reap the fruits of the redemption that He wrought for us. Thus even in His triumph Christ appears as our minister, as serving us. He cannot shake off the character which He expressed in saying that the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister. Even in heaven He tells us that He will serve those who served Him faithfully on earth (St. Luke xiv. 15).

2. "Going, therefore, teach all nations." In these words Christ again communicates His power to His apostles, confirming His former words, "As my Father sent Me, so I send you." It is the greatest mark of love, to desire to communicate to others the best gift given to us. So the Lord of heaven and earth gives, as far as He can to sinful man, the wondrous power that was given to Him, that they may go and carry out His work and earn a share in His reward.

3. The apostles are sent to make disciples of all nations. All are to be subject to Christ; the Christian Church is to be Catholic. There is no distinction with Him of race or blood or nationality. Take care that you imitate His universal charity, and beware of the narrow spirit that despises other countries and races.



### 34.—The Work Intrusted to the Apostles.

Read St. Matt. xviii. 15-20; St. Luke xxiv. 46-48.

Our Lord sums up the tasks intrusted to the apostles mainly under three heads: 1. They were to be witnesses all over the world of the reality of the life, and death, and resurrection of Christ. "You are witnesses," He says, "of these things." Before Jews and Gentiles, among those who had never heard the name of Christ, before kings and rulers, they were to be witnesses for Christ; never flinching before reproach, outrage, imprisonment, torture, death; everywhere confessing Christ crucified. Am I such a witness for Christ, even where I have to suffer for my loyalty?

2. They were to administer, in Christ's name, the Sacraments of the Church, especially Baptism in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and Penance for the remission of sins. These were to be the channels of the grace of God, the means of applying to the souls of all who should receive them the merits of Christ. We cannot overrate the dignity and importance of the Sacraments through which the treasures of God's love flow into our souls.

3. They were to teach those whom they converted, to observe all things that Jesus had commanded them. He who keeps every precept of the law except one virtually disobeys the whole of it. He who accepts all the dogmas of the Church with one exception is a heretic and an unbeliever. Do I keep all God's law? or do I mar my obedience by some one wilful act of disobedience?

### 35.—The Promise to the Apostles.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

1. When Our Lord sent out His apostles to convert the world, their hearts might well quail at the difficulties of the task. They, poor, ignorant, unlearned men, how would they hope to achieve a work so apparently impossible? So their Master makes them a promise, which is one to fill their hearts with confidence and with sure expectation of success. He promises that He will always be with them; that whatever they undertake in His Name shall have His Omnipotence to supply for all their weakness. "I am with you always." To us, Christ says just the same. In all that you do for Me I am always with you. What confidence this ought to give us!

2. These words meant more than this: they conferred upon the Church that He founded the promise that He would guide it to all truth; that He, through the Holy Spirit, would always be present to it, to preserve it from the least jot or tittle of error. Other religions wander off into every kind of error, and inconsistency, and contradictions; but the Church founded on the apostles has the Divine Teacher always present to it. How happy we should be to live under its roof, and to have it for our guide and teacher!

3. This promise is made to all the successors of the apostles, to the consummation of the world; popes, and bishops, and priests, each in their own degree, speak with the authority of Christ. "He that hears you, hears Me." How reverently, then, we ought to listen to their words when they teach us truth!

### **36.—The Foundations of the Church.**

Read St. Luke xxiv. 44-46.

1. During the forty days that elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, Our Lord visited the apostles from time to time, and sketched out the foundations of the future Church, or, as St. Luke says (Acts i. 3), spoke to them of the Kingdom of God. How much there must have been for them to learn—the Doctrine of Infallibility, the whole Sacramental system, the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, the position of Our Lady in the Church, of the grace of God, and the mysteries of the future resurrection, etc. How happy to have such a Teacher! He is still ready to teach every faithful soul, and to dispel its darkness respecting the mysteries of the Faith.

2. We also read that He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. Before this, they had read the prophecies, the psalms, all that told of the Christ to come; but the words had made no impression. Even to the last, they had not recognized in His life and death the fulfilment of what had been predicted of the Messiah. Yet they were good men, docile, believing in Him. How earnestly, then, we should beg for light when we read the Word of God! How strange are the delusions of the Bible-readers outside of the Church, who fancy that they understand what they read!

3. The eleven apostles were to be the foundations of the Church; they are represented as such in the Apocalypse. They were all founded in Christ, and the Church was founded in Him; they were the witnesses to the whole world, of the truth of Christianity. With what confidence we can rest upon the solid foundation which Christ Himself laid before He ascended to heaven!

### 37.—The Parting Advice.

Read Acts i. 1-5.

1. Our Lord, before His Passion, had promised His apostles they should not be left desolate, but that He would send the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, to lead them into all truth. Now that He leaves them, He renews His promise. They had not understood it when it was first made; but now it begins to dawn upon them that some wondrous power was to descend from heaven, and to fill them with strength, wisdom, prudence, and authority to carry out the task intrusted to them. God never calls men to a work without giving them all the gifts necessary to carry it out. This should be my consolation if I am inclined to despond at my own weakness.

2. But, for this gift they were *to wait*—"Stay in the city till you be endued with power from on high." This was to be their first lesson—to *wait*. It is not an easy lesson. We are so impatient and impulsive! We do not like waiting; we want to go to work at once, to see results without delay. But we must learn the lesson Christ taught the apostles, and *wait*.

3. To *wait* is the secret of success in spiritual things. Those who are willing to wait, always get what they want. We have always to wait for God's best gifts. All the saints had to wait. Our Lady and St. Joseph, above all, had to wait. Why should we be downcast if we appear to fail? It is only that God is keeping us waiting. "Oh, wait on the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."

### 38.—The Final Visit.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 48-50.

1. Our Lord's last appearance to His apostles was at Jerusalem. He seems to have talked long with them on this occasion, and to have opened their minds to a right understanding of the Scriptures, and to have explained to them their future mission. Yet even to the last their notions were confused and hazy, and they still clung to the ideas of a temporal kingdom, and asked, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" So slow are men to be rid of worldly hopes and aspirations, or to recognize that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

2. After Our Lord's discourse He led them out as far as Bethany, still conversing with them, and instructing them in the work they were to do. How they hang on every word with a sort of presentiment that He is going to leave them! At length they reach the Garden of Gethsemani and ascend the Hill of Olivet. All at once He is transfigured before their eyes, and a light far brighter than the sun surrounds them; and Jesus in the midst raises His hand to bless them, as they remain in an ecstasy of joy and fear, and wonder and delight.

3. At the same time they see around them a countless number of angels come to welcome their king and their God, and hear the music of heaven and angelic strains; while in the midst their Lord, now radiant with Divine beauty and glory and majesty, is raised above the ground. The vision of Him makes them forget all else, and ravishes their souls as He pronounces the solemn words of benediction. That one moment was enough to compensate them for all they had suffered. How much more will the first moment of heaven make all earthly afflictions seem as nothing.

### 39.—The Ascension.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 51 ; Acts i. 9.

1. As the apostles gaze upon their Lord in His Divine Beauty, He slowly rises through the air, and the glorious vision fades away from their sight, until at length an intervening cloud hides Him entirely from them. They still stand there gazing upwards. Their hearts, their affections, their hopes, their interests, nay, their very lives, have gone with Him to heaven. Henceforward they are risen with Christ into heaven ; and so they must seek those things that are above. I did not see Christ ascend, but I know it by faith. Has His Ascension the same influence on my life ? Are my thoughts and hopes fixed on heavenly things ?

2. Why had Christ left them ? Not for His own sake, but for theirs. He might have remained with them if it had been for their advantage ; but then they would not have been able to live a life of faith, or to prove their fidelity by their outward remembrance of Him whom they saw no longer. It would be no benefit to us if Christ were still visibly present among us. It would deprive us of the merit of loving Him that is invisible, and believing in Him though we see Him not.

3. Besides, Christ in His wondrous love has not left us. He is present in every church under the Eucharistic species. There we can talk to Him, pray to Him, praise Him, listen to His voice speaking to our souls—everything save see Him with our eyes. One day we shall see Him, and then indeed our joy will be full.

## 40.—The Return to Jerusalem.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 52, 53 ; Acts i. 10-12.

1. The apostles remain long gazing into heaven. At length they are roused from their trance by two angels, who ask them why they stand looking up into heaven, and tell them that one day Jesus will so come again as they have seen Him go into heaven. The angels speak almost as if it would be but a few months or years before He would return ; so the apostles themselves and the saints of God seem to anticipate His speedy coming. The happy day will not be long delayed, and we know not how near it may be. If our hearts are in heaven we shall be watching and waiting to welcome Jesus when He returns in His glory.

2. Slowly, and like men awaking out of a dream, but with the sweet remembrance still living in their hearts, they return to Jerusalem with great joy. How could they rejoice when their Master had departed ? They did not think of themselves, but of Him. They rejoiced in His exaltation and glory. Their joy was the best and truest and brightest joy—the unselfish joy in the joy of their Lord and Master.

3. When they returned to Jerusalem they were always in the Temple, praising and blessing God. This is what Our Lord loves—that we should show our joy by thanking Him in that place where He is specially present. In all times of joy, what can I do better than go and kneel before the altar, to thank Him for all His love and goodness to me ?

# **Maria Magnificata.**

**SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR A MONTH ON OUR  
LADY'S LIFE.**





## P R E F A C E .

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THESE meditations in miniature are intended for the month of May or October, or to accompany the recital of the Thirty Days' Prayer. They are founded on the chief incidents in our Lady's life as recorded in Holy Scripture or handed down by tradition. They are suited either for meditation, or for the reading of those who have no time for meditation, and who nevertheless wish to do something to honor Mary and testify their love for her. Each of them is broken up into three heads or points, intended to furnish, directly or indirectly, some practical suggestion for him who reads or meditates thereon.

If this little book should in any way contribute to Mary's honor, it will have fulfilled the object with which it was written.

R. F. C.

*Lady Day*, 1888.



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## 1st Day.—Mary's Immaculate Conception.

*The Lord said to the serpent, I will put enmities between thee and the woman. (Gen. iii. 14, 15.)*

1. In these words the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was announced to our first parents. It was to be the reversal of the friendship with the serpent contracted by Eve when she listened to his voice and fell under his power. The second Eve was never to be under the power of the devil, the enmity between them was to admit of no possible exception. This involved the grace of being conceived Immaculate.

2. Mary's Immaculate Conception was the foundation of all her graces. The absence of any stain or spot of sin marked her off from all the rest of mankind. It distinguished her from the holiest of the saints, since they, one and all, were sinners. Her perfect sinlessness was the source of all her glory and all her majesty; it was this which opened the door to the unlimited graces that she received from God; it is this which qualified her for her Divine Maternity, and for her throne as Queen of Heaven.

3. If sinlessness is such a priceless treasure, how I ought to value it! and how I ought to hate sin with a deadly hatred, and to detest and avoid even what are called little sins! How eagerly should I cry out to the Immaculate Mother of God, this day and every day, in words that she herself suggested to one of her servants—

O Mary, conceived without sin,  
Pray for us who have recourse to thee!

## 2nd Day.—Mary's First Graces.

*Her foundations are on the holy mountain.*  
(Psalm lxxxvi. 1.)

1. Mary began her journey along the road to perfection at a height to which other saints only arrived at the end of a long life of saintliness. God loved her more at the first moment of her existence than He loved the holiest among the rest of men at the time that their earthly pilgrimage was over and they were ripe for their heavenly reward. What glory must have been hers even from the beginning!

2. What was the cause of this special predilection that God had for this newly-created soul? In all other children of Adam original sin prevented the Divine generosity from having a free course. But Mary was created Immaculate, and therefore the grace of God streamed into her soul without check or hindrance. Oh, happy child whose sinlessness received so glorious a recompense!

3. What is it checks in us the inflow of God's supernatural gifts? It is always sin; not so much sins in the past as sins and imperfections wilfully admitted in the present. These must be relinquished, if we desire God to give us good measure of His grace. We must try and hate sin as Mary hated it, and we must cry to her:

Hail, Mary, ever undefiled!

Hail, Queen of purity!

O make thy children chaste and mild,  
And turn their hearts to thee.

### 3d Day.—Mary's earliest Gift.

*God said to Abraham, Walk before Me and be perfect.*  
(Gen. xvii. 1.)

1. The highest praise that can be bestowed upon the saints of God during their earthly pilgrimage is that they "walked with God." In this all perfection consists, as we see from God's words to faithful Abraham. This was the privilege of our first parents before they sinned. "The Lord God walked with them in Paradise." (Gen. iii. 8.) This was the praise of Henoah and of Noe. It is an anticipation of the eternal happiness of heaven, where the just will walk with God forever in the glory of the Beatific Vision.

2. What is meant by walking with God? It means an intimate union with Him, a continual and joyful remembrance of His presence, a perfect agreement of will with God. This was the beginning of God's gifts to Mary; it was the result of her sinlessness. It rendered her life a sort of heaven upon earth. From the first moment of her existence she could cry out, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him," and He could answer, "Thou art all fair, My love, and there is not a spot in Thee." (Cant. iv. 7.)

3. God was thus always present to Mary's thoughts; every action, every movement was directed to His glory—this was the secret of her unapproachable holiness. How different am I from Mary! I think so little of God, and do so little for Him! I will try and do more, that I too may become more pleasing to God, more full of His graces and gifts.

Holy Mother of God, pray for me!



#### 4th Day.—God's design in beautifying Mary.

*Wisdom hath builded for herself a house.* (Prov. ix. 1.)

1. God did not bestow all her gifts and graces on Mary for her own sake. She had done nothing to earn that first grace that was the foundation of all the rest. It was the free gift of God. He chose her of His own good pleasure. He fixed His love upon her simply because He willed to do so, "that He might show the riches of His glory on the vessel of mercy that He had prepared to glory" (Rom. ix. 23), and to a glory more resplendent than the combined glory of all the other saints.

2. But He had a special object in the exceeding glory conferred on His chosen daughter. It was because she was to entertain her Creator, because she was to carry in her womb the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God. It would have been unworthy of the Divinity that God should take to Himself flesh from one whose flesh had ever been tainted with sin. It was to adorn a house for Himself, when He came to dwell amongst men, that Mary was adorned with such surpassing beauty.

3. Mary was also decked with these wondrous graces to prepare her for her work of intercession. If she was to be the Mother of all men, to take them all under her sacred protection, it was right that she should be from the first far exalted above them all, their Model as well as their Queen and their Mother. Oh, happy we, to have such a Mother and such a Model!

Him who gave us such a Mother,  
Let our grateful songs proclaim;  
Loving hearts and joyful voices  
Praise her great Creator's name.

## 5th Day.—The Birth of Mary.

*The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (St. John i. 4.)

1. At the time of Mary's birth the whole world was merged in darkness. The heathen nations were steeped in vice and pride. The Jews, too, had corrupted their ways and departed from God. Everywhere there was sin and gloom, scarce a bright spot on the face of the earth. But when Mary was born a light arose amid the darkness: the dawn of the glorious day that was to usher in the Redeemer. So, too, the darkness of the sinner's soul is dispersed by Mary's holy influence. Where the love of her is born in the soul, all becomes full of light, and Jesus comes to make his habitation there.

2. Before Mary's birth God sought in vain for one who would always be faithful to Him, for one soul that would always love Him as it ought. For four thousand years He had invariably been disappointed, but now at length He had found one who fulfilled all His desires, who satisfied the yearnings of His Divine Heart. A worthy daughter of His omnipotent love.

3. Mary in the first hour of her life brought more glory to God than all the saints of the Old Testament. In her was made perfect the obedience of Abraham, the chastity of Joseph, the patience of Job, the meekness of Moses, the prudence of Josue. It is because she is the model and pattern of these and all other virtues, that she can communicate them to us. I must beg of Mary to obtain for me obedience, chastity, patience, prudence, and all else I need.

Virgin most pure, Star of the Sea,  
Pray for the sinner, pray for me.

## 6th Day.—The Presentation of Mary in the Temple.

*The King shall greatly desire thy beauty, for He is the Lord thy God, and Him they shall adore.* (Psalm xlv. 12.)

1. Mary from the first moment of her existence offered herself to God as an entire and an unblemished holocaust. From the instant when she was conceived Immaculate the burden of her continual song was this: "I live; not I, but God Who lives in me." Oh, glorious child, who was thus from the first a participator of the Divine Nature!

2. But she was not content with this mere offering of her heart. She must in outward act consecrate herself to God. As soon as her tiny feet could walk she was brought to the Temple by her holy parents, Joachim and Anna. With what an ecstasy of delight she must have entered into the Temple, crying out, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." (Psalm lxxxiii. 1, 2.) Have I any of the same desire to consecrate my life to God?

3. Mary knew that God is not to be found in the midst of the tumult and confusion of distracting cares, but that it is in silence and in solitude that He speaks to the heart (Osee ii. 14). She was teaching us to give, in some quiet retreat, now and again, our thoughts and our heart to God and God alone.

Mary, it was thy lowliness  
Well pleasing to the Lord,  
That made thee worthy to become  
The Mother of the Word.

## 7th Day.—Mary's Life in the Temple.

*Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.* (Psalm cxxxi. 14.)

1. Let us watch this tender little maiden in her daily life in the Temple. How exact in obedience to all her superiors! how punctual in the performance of every duty! how full of charity to her little companions. How she delights to anticipate the wishes of those who represented Almighty God to her! How she rejoices in the most menial offices! How she retires during her leisure to pray in secret! When I examine my daily life, does it at all correspond to hers?

2. What is it Mary is continually praying for? That God would hasten the coming of the Messias. and that, if it were God's will, she might be thought worthy to be the handmaid of His Mother. It never entered into her wildest dreams that she was the chosen one who was to usher into the world the Saviour of the world. Thus it is that the holiest always esteem themselves as nothing worth. If I were more holy, I should be more humble.

3. What a joy it is to Mary to take part in the sacred psalmody of the Temple! As she sings the praises of God it seems to her that she is in heaven, singing with the angels. How sweet her voice sounds in the ears of God, sweeter than all the music of the heavenly choirs! What is it gives such surpassing beauty to her song? It is her heavenly purity. Blessed are the pure in heart: their voice always sounds sweetly as it rises in prayer or praise to God.

Virgin of all virgins  
To thy shelter take us,  
Gentlest of the gentle,  
Chaste and gentle make us.

## 8th Day.—Mary's Espousals.

*I have put my trust in Thee, O God. I have said, My lot is in Thy hands. (Psalm xxx. 15.)*

1. When Mary arrived at the age when it was the custom for Jewish maidens to leave the service of the Temple, the High Priest told her that a husband would be chosen for her. But Mary had already made a vow of virginity to God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and now she received the command to join herself in wedlock, and God inspired her to obey. What a trial for her faith and confidence in God!

2. What a trial, too, for her humility, that she who had consecrated her virginity to the Most High, should appear before the world in the ordinary state of wedlock, that she who was the Bride of the Most High should be counted as the bride of mortal man! Yet Mary rejoiced in this humiliation. She knew well that those whom God humbles He will in due time exalt.

3. Mary's confidence in God was not disappointed. He did not fail to fulfil the desires of His handmaid. She found, on being espoused, that Joseph her Spouse had, like her, made a vow of chastity, and that she could therefore dwell with him in perfect security. Oh, how good God is to those who hope in Him!

Hail, holy Joseph, hail!  
Sweet Spouse of Mary, hail!  
Chaste as the lily flower  
In Eden's peaceful vale.

## 9th Day.—The Marriage of Mary.

*The young man shall dwell with the virgin, and the bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride. (Isaias lxii. 5.)*

1. Mary, the unspotted Spouse of Joseph, learned by degrees how her marriage was a part of God's wonderful designs regarding her. If she had become a mother in an unmarried state, the world would naturally have regarded her as guilty of sin. The Jews, unable to understand so wonderful a mystery, would have pointed the finger of scorn at her. Thus God always guards the good name of those who are true to Him.

2. Mary, too, needed a protector. She was very young: she was to be exposed to many a hardship, to journey afar, to dwell in a strange land. How could the tender, youthful Mother have passed through all these vicissitudes without the guardianship of Joseph's love? How thoughtfully God provides for the welfare of those who commit themselves to Him!

3. Mary, moreover, needed one who would provide for her maintenance. Her wants were few, she loved poverty, but how could she have provided food and clothing for herself and her Divine Son? To Joseph she was entrusted that he might by his labors earn what was necessary for their support. How generously God supplies all the wants of those who trust in Him!

St. Joseph, none there be,  
Oh! none that love like thee.  
Dearest of saints, be near us when we die.

## 10th Day.—The Annunciation.

*Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.*  
(St. Luke i. 30.)

1. Mary's life as Joseph's Spouse was no less one of devotion and recollection and prayer than her life in the Temple. In their little cottage her time was spent, when her household duties were done, in fervent prayer to God. Thus she is said to have been occupied when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her. Mary's prayers and Mary's longing desires had moved the Heart of God to send a Redeemer for mankind! Oh, omnipotent efficacy of earnest desire and persevering prayer!

2. The message the Angel brought bewildered the chaste and humble maiden. Her first thought was one of fear—fear lest the privilege announced to her should be purchased at the cost of her Immaculate virginity: she would not sacrifice this even to be Mother of the Messiah: anything rather than forfeit that priceless jewel!

3. But God, Who sent an angel to comfort Christ in His Passion, reassured Mary by the Angel's voice: Fear not, thou hast found grace with God: Because thou dost esteem thyself the most unworthy, God will exalt thee to a dignity which seems almost beyond the power of God to confer. He will make thee the Mother of His Son. Oh, wondrous dignity of true humility!

Mary, it was thy lowliness  
Well pleasing to the Lord,  
That made thee worthy to become  
The Mother of the Word.

## 11th Day.—The Incarnation.

*The Word was made Flesh.* (St. John i. 14.)

1. God would not take flesh in Mary's womb without her consent. The Angel, after giving his message, awaited her reply. No false humility prevented Mary from obeying the mandate: no self-consciousness made her shrink back. In words which are a model of obedience and prudence and forgetfulness of self she accepted the Divine Maternity: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.

2. One thing only was present to Mary's mind when she spoke these words: the wish to do exactly what God desired of her. This is the secret of all true virtue—to make His will the motive and the guiding principle of every action we do. If we do this, we shall soon be saints.

3. When Mary spoke these words an event took place which seems incredible. The Infinite God became of the same nature with one of His finite creatures. The union between Mary and her God became the most intimate possible to any created being. God became flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. What must have been the more than angelic purity of her nature before her God came to dwell with her! What must have been her almost infinite dignity after He had taken flesh in her sacred womb!

For the Heaven He left He found Heaven in thee,  
For He shines in thy shining, Sweet Star of the Sea!



## 12th Day.—The Visitation.

*As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears,  
the infant in my womb leaped for joy. (St. Luke i. 46.)*

1. Mary's first action after God had come to dwell in her was one of self-denying charity. She undertook a troublesome journey in order to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Thus she proclaimed charity to be the virtue which above all Christ brought with Him from heaven. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have charity one to another." How can I stand this test?

2. God made Mary's visit the occasion of a wonderful miracle. On her entrance into St. Elizabeth's dwelling, St. John Baptist was cleansed from sin in his mother's womb. Mary was the channel of the exceptional privilege of the cleansing away of sin in the case of the unborn child. As then so now: Mary is the channel of all graces, and above all, of the restoration of the sinner to friendship with God.

3. Mary's charity is not less present now than at the time of the Visitation. Nay, she is far more eager now than then to promote the happiness and console the sorrows of those who fly to her for succor. Why do not I obtain more graces and blessings than I do through Mary's intercession? It is no fault of hers—it is, alas! because I am proud, self-willed, obstinate, selfish, indifferent.

Mother of God, Star of the Sea,  
Pray for a wanderer, pray for me!

### 13th Day.—Mary's time of Expectancy.

*Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. (St. Matt. i. 20.)*

1. In due course of time it became evident that Mary was to be a mother. She had said not a word to St. Joseph about the Angel's visit, and her holy Spouse knew not what to think. Yet she was still silent. She left it to God to vindicate her in His own good time. How different her conduct from my eagerness to justify myself!

2. St. Joseph, like a faithful and prudent man, did not act without due deliberation. How miserable he must have been during those weeks of hesitation; he could not suspect Mary of evil. Yet there was the clear evidence of fact. The true solution was one no one could have supposed possible. He meditated to send her away quietly—what an agony to lose his precious Spouse! Yet patiently and prudently he waited and prayed.

3. God does not forsake His servants in their distress. An Angel by night announced to Joseph that he was the Spouse of the Mother of God—the foster-father of the King of Heaven. What joy must have inundated his soul! how he must have cried out in the joy and gratitude of his heart: The Lord is indeed good to those who hope in Him!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul!

## 14th Day.—The Nativity.

*She brought forth her first-born Son and called his name Jesus.* (St. Matt. i. 25.)

1. Mary brought forth her Son in poverty and humiliation. She had been slighted and scorned. No room was found for her in the inn. In the cave where the ox and ass are stabled, the Mother of God brought into the world the King of kings. Oh, blessed humiliation! Oh, happy poverty! You are the marks that God is going to do a great work—where you are absent, we cannot expect lasting and solid fruit.

2. How Mary rejoiced in this humiliation! how she welcomed such poverty as this! How could she fail to rejoice in it, with Jesus in her arms? If we are wise we shall pray for humiliation, for without it we never can have the Divine Infant for our own companion: we never can bring Him forth in the souls of others; we must be humbled if He is to exalt us: we must be poor in spirit if we are to be blessed in our work.

3. Mary could say of Jesus as no other mother ever said of her first-born son: He is mine and mine alone. Every other son has an earthly father who has a share in his begetting: Jesus had no father save His Father in heaven. Thus He was Mary's own child, her sole property and possession. What union could be more close (the Hypostatic Union alone excepted) than that of Mary and Jesus?

Holy Mother of God, pray for us!

## 15th Day.—Mary's Purification.

*After the days of her Purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.*

(St. Luke ii. 22.)

1. Mary's Purification! How strangely the phrase sounds in our ears! What purification could be needed for her who was the pattern and model of all purity? Yet Mary remained retired for forty days after the birth of her Son, and then went up to the Temple as if to be purified. Why was this? It was because she loved obedience to the law, even at the chance of being misunderstood; she sought no exemption from its precepts.

2. But she had another reason for her purification. She was to take part in her Son's work of Redemption, and therefore had to share His reproach. He chose the road of contempt. He was circumcised as if a sinner; baptized in the Jordan with sinners as if a sinner; and Mary's joy was to tread the same path with Him.

3. Mary presents her Divine Son in the Temple: renewing on that day her consent to the Sacrifice of His Life for the sins of the world. She saw with agonizing presentiment all that He had to suffer—dimly at first and vaguely—but none the less painfully yet joyfully she made the sacrifice. She spared not her own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

Joy, joy, the Mother comes,  
And in her arms she brings  
The Light of all the world,  
The Christ, the King of kings.

## 16th Day.—Simeon's Prophecy to Mary.

*Yea, through thine own soul a sword shall pierce.*  
(St. Luke ii. 35.)

1. At these words of holy Simeon all Mary's joy was changed to sorrow. Her Divine Son was to be a sign that would be contradicted. His life was to be one long series of disappointments, outrages, insults, ill-usage from those He had come to save. Who can describe the grief of Mary at hearing this? Her darling Son, her God was to be persecuted even to the death.

2. From that time forth Simeon's words were ever present to her mind. There came up before her all the prophecies, the full meaning of which she had not realized before. She remembered holy David's words, "They pierced My hands and My feet," and she thought as she watched the Divine Infant of His future Crucifixion. The cry of the Psalmist, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" reminded her of the dereliction of His human soul. From this time forward she was indeed the Mother of Sorrows.

3. Yet God in thus giving Mary so large a share in the sorrow of her Son was manifesting His special love for her. "Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth." (Prov. iii. 12.) Mary's chastisement was great in proportion to His love for her. If we remembered this we should welcome suffering, not shrink from it, and say in real earnest—

Holy Mother, pierce me through,  
In my heart each wound renew  
Of my Saviour crucified.

## 17th Day.—The Flight into Egypt.

*Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt.* (St. Matt. ii. 13.)

1. It was not long before Mary experienced how true Simeon's prophecy was to be. In the midst of the night, as she slept with the Divine Infant by her side, she was aroused by St. Joseph, who ordered her to prepare to leave their home and to go forth amid the darkness—and whither? To Egypt, the land of Israel's foes; far away across the desert, where they would be unknown and despised. What a trial for Mary's obedience!

2. The command, moreover, seemed so harsh and arbitrary an one. Surely the omnipotent God could have provided for the safety of His own Son in a thousand ways without imposing a long and painful journey. Yet Mary murmured not. If I had received such a command, should I have yielded a willing and uncomplaining obedience?

3. Watch Mary in her preparations: how prompt, how orderly. She is thanking God for this trial as she gets ready what is necessary for the journey. How cheerful she is! how she makes the best of everything! how she consoles St. Joseph by her thoughtfulness, her charity, her never-failing good humor! What a model to us when unforeseen annoyances arise! The only way to make our crosses light is to take them cheerily, as Mary did.

Mary, model of resignation, pray for us!

Refuge in grief, Star of the Sea,  
Pray for the mourner, pray for me!

## 18th Day.—Mary's Life at Nazareth.

*Besides Thee, what do I desire upon the earth?*  
(Psalm lxxii. 25.)

1. When the Holy Family returned from Egypt, they took up their abode in a little cottage at Nazareth. Yet that cottage was the closest approximation to heaven upon earth that ever has been or ever can be found. There dwelt the Omnipotent God, the Queen of Heaven, the Protector of the whole Church of God. This poor and humble dwelling was chosen by Almighty God as the most suitable abode for those He loved best.

2. What an unspeakable joy and consolation it must have been to Mary to dwell for those years in familiar conversation with Jesus! To carry in her arms her God, *hers* as He was none other's, flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone! to enjoy His sweet caresses! to hear Him call her Mother! to gaze on the unveiled countenance of God made flesh! What an ecstasy of happiness for Mary!

3. What happiness, too, Mary found in the company of her chaste Spouse St. Joseph! No husband was ever so thoughtful as Joseph, none so gentle, so unselfish. Such a tower of manly strength! What a pleasure it was to her to obey him! How she watches for every expression of his will! How promptly, joyfully, loyally she carries it out! Is this the way I behave to those to whom I am subject?

Oh, nought did Jesus love on earth  
So tenderly as Thee!

**19th Day.—Mary's loss of Jesus for three days.**

*Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.*  
(St. Luke ii. 48.)

1. When Jesus was twelve years old, He went up with His parents for their annual visit to the Temple. On their return they missed Him, and for three days sought Him, and sought in vain. What must have been the agony of Mary's heart during those three days! Had Jesus left them never to return? Could it be that she had unconsciously, by some negligence, forfeited the privilege of the company of Jesus? Was she never to behold Him again? Such were thoughts that occurred to her in the piercing anguish of her heart. Let us compassionate the Holy Mother of God in her desolation.

2. What a cruel void in Mary's heart! The light of her eyes and the joy of her heart had gone from her. What an utter blank all else seemed without Jesus—how could she live without Him? Without Him life would be death! "How shall I comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion? for great as an ocean is thy sorrow!"

3. Mary, then, can understand our sorrow in times of darkness and desolation. No blackness of desolation in our hearts is ever like the desolation of Mary when she had lost Jesus! In all our anguish we will cry to her! She will not be deaf to our despairing cry, but will most surely succor us and restore to us peace and joy. As to her, there returned peace and joy unspeakable when she found her Divine Son in the Temple.

Mother of Sorrows, pray for us.

Hear, sweet Mother, hear the weary,  
Borne upon life's troubled sea!



## 20th Day.—The Death of St. Joseph.

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.* (Psalm cxv. 15.)

1. For nigh thirty years Joseph had been the faithful spouse of Mary, the gentle foster-father of Jesus. But now the time came for him to die. How tenderly Mary nursed him in his failing strength! how she delighted in supplying all his wants, in ministering to them during the day, in watching by his side during the night. What a model to us who often grow weary with the long sickness of some invalid whom we are tending!

2. St. Joseph's was the pattern and model of a happy death! What joy to die in the arms of Jesus and Mary! to be consoled by the Queen of Heaven! to receive the last blessing from God Incarnate! No wonder that *he* is the patron of a happy death, since from the beginning of the world there was none whose death was surrounded with such glorious privileges and blessings as his.

3. How had Joseph secured so happy a death?

(a.) By waiting for God's guidance in all his actions and promptly following it.

(b.) By his devotion to Mary and to Jesus.

(c.) By his patience, meekness, prudence, gentleness, purity.

Do I fulfil these requirements, so that when I come to die the prince of darkness may find no offence in me?

Grant me mercy in that day:  
Help me, Mary, my sweet Mother,  
Holy Joseph, near me stay!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I die in peace in your  
blessed company!

## 21st Day.—Mary at Cana.

*Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.* (St. John ii. 5.)

1. Jesus' first miracle was performed at the marriage-feast at Cana. Thither Mary was invited, and from the words of the Gospel it seems as if Jesus was invited because His Mother had been already asked. Thus we learn that where Mary comes Jesus is sure to come also. He who entertains her with love and devotion will find that the love of Jesus will soon spring up in his heart.

2. During the marriage-feast the wine runs short. Our Lady notices it; it grieves her; she appeals to her Son in a model prayer. She simply states the need, and leaves all else to Him—"They have no wine." Such should be our prayers. Jesus likes us to tell Him our needs. He knows them, but He makes this a condition of fulfilling our desires.

3. Jesus' words at first seem like a rebuke—"Woman, what is to Me, and to thee?" He often pretends to turn a deaf ear to us. How does Mary behave under the seeming slight? She regards it as a sign that He will grant her request, and turning to the servants, bids them obey Him in all things. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Mary knew that it is to the submissive and obedient that Christ gives His best gifts.

May the most blessed and holy will of God be done in all things! Amen.

My Lord, my God, what willest Thou?  
Thy blessed will is mine!

## 22nd Day.—Mary during our Lord's Public Life.

*Whoever shall do the will of My Father in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.* (St. Matt. xii. 50.)

1. When our Lord left the cottage at Nazareth and went forth to enter on His Public Ministry, what an aching void must have been left in Mary's heart. How her heart must have yearned to be with Him! Earth was indeed for her a barren waste, as long as He was away. Have we anything of this love of the company of Jesus? any desire to seek Him out, where He waits for us in the tabernacle that we may enjoy sweet intercourse with Him?

2. Yet Mary murmured not. She was willing to sacrifice for the good of others even the solace of Jesus' presence. She knew that by her obedience she would be united to Him in bonds far more intimate than the bonds of the closest earthly union. Therefore in joy and in sorrow, in consolation and desolation, whether Christ were with her or far away, her only desire was to submit to the holy will of God.

3. Mary by her prayers and tears and intercession took part in our Lord's work. He had decreed that His Mother thus should help Him in His Public Ministry. Though He could do all, He left something for her to do, as He does for all the saints. What a happiness and privilege this! I, too, can take my part in the redemption of mankind!

Queen of Sorrows, guide and guard me,  
Let me to thine arms repair.  
In thy tender bosom hide me,  
Mary, take me to thy care!

## 23rd Day.—Mary meets Jesus carrying the Cross.

*Bearing His Cross He went forth to the place that is called Calvary. (St. John xix. 17.)*

1. As the time of the Passion drew near, Mary's realization of the approaching sufferings of her Son became more vivid. The Sword of Simeon pierced her heart as it had never done before. How could she endure to see her Son and her God outraged and ill-treated, insulted and put to death? "Weeping, she wept in the night: there was none to comfort her among all those that were dear to her." (Lament. i. 2.)

2. At last the storm of anguish burst upon her. The apostles bring her the heart-breaking news: He has been seized by the Pharisees, insulted by the soldiers, dragged before Pilate, scourged, condemned to the death of the Cross. What a night and morning for the Mother of Jesus! Each moment full of an agony worse than death.

3. At last she could refrain no longer. She must go and meet Him Whom her soul loved. What a meeting must that have been! Her darling Son all masked in blood, toiling under the weight of the Cross. Oh, holy Mother, who would not be moved with compassion? "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like to that with which God hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." (Lament. i. 12.)

Mother of God, He broke thy heart,  
That it might wider be;  
That in the vastness of His love  
There might be room for me.

## 24th Day.—Mary at the foot of the Cross.

*There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.*  
(St. John xix. 25.)

1. What words can ever describe the indescribable anguish that rent the sacred heart of Mary as she looked upon her Divine Son hanging on the Cross. Was there ever such a spectacle? He is so torn and mangled, covered with a mantle of blood from head to foot, that one can scarce recognize in that unsightly figure the human form. Can it be He, the fairest among the children of men? My God, what can have transformed Him into this piteous, this ghastly object?

2. Every wound in Jesus' body was also a wound in the heart of Mary: every fibre, every nerve throbbing in agony. Every pang he suffered re-echoed in her heart. She endured by her *compassion* a share in all the anguish of His Passion. What was the thick darkness around compared with the black darkness that overspread her heart.

3. Why did Mary suffer all this? That she might be our Mother—the Mother of mankind. She who brought forth her Divine Son without a pang, suffered many a piercing pang when from the Cross her dying Son commended to her the sinful sons of men. That was indeed a maternity of sorrow she suffered for our sins: for mine.

Jesus, when the three hours were run,  
Bequeathed thee from the Cross to me.  
How can I rightly love thy Son,  
Sweet Mother, if I love not thee?

**25th Day.--Jesus is placed in His Mother's arms.**

*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*  
(St. Matt. xxvii. 46.)

1. These words must have echoed in Mary's heart when the Body of her Divine Son was placed in her arms. She was alone! Jesus was dead. She had heard His last cry of agony, and seen the spear pierce His Sacred Side. She was alone! Oh, Mary, what must have been thy desolation now that thy Son and thy God is no more! Listen to her words: "Therefore do I weep and mine eyes run down with water, because the comforter of my soul is far from me." (Lament. i. 16.)

2. Watch the Holy Mother as she washes the blood from the Body of her Son! How she kisses each wound with adoring love! Amid all her desolation there is nevertheless an underlying fount of joy at knowing that those wounds have wrought the salvation of the world, that in the Paradise of God they will shine like jewels to all eternity.

3. In this mingled joy and sorrow Mary is *especially* full of love for sinners, and she loves them because they cost her so much anguish and because Her Divine Son loved them so dearly that for them He suffered and died. Mary loves me because I am a sinner—this at least may comfort and encourage me—Jesus died for me because I am a sinner.

Oh, give me tears to shed with thee  
Beneath the Cross on Calvary.

## 26th Day.—Mary sees Jesus laid in the Sepulchre.

*Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.*

(St. Matt. vi. 21.)

1. When Mary had finished the mournful task of preparing the Sacred Body of her Son for burial, the disciples carry Him to the sepulchre in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. Watch that mournful procession, and realize if you can the desolation of Mary's sacred heart. All her hopes, all her joys, all her affections were buried with Jesus. He was her one and only treasure, and where her treasure was laid, there was her heart also.

2. Mary amid all her anguish had experienced a strange and melancholy pleasure in embracing the dead Body of her Son and performing for it the last offices of love. She knew, too, that though the human soul was parted from it, the Divinity was still there. She could adore with the highest worship that mangled form, those limbs livid and cold. But now she was separated even from that Sacred Body. How empty, how blank, was all around without Jesus!

3. Yet Mary, in spite of her desolation, was never dejected, never gloomy. She was full of joy and peace. In the anguish of her separation from Jesus she was more than comforted by the knowledge that all His sufferings were past, and that He had already begun to see the fruit of His travail. Those who love God more than themselves have always a fount of consolation in every sorrow.

By the hope thy name inspires,  
By our doom, reversed through thee  
Bring us, Queen of angel choirs.  
To a blest eternity!

## 27th Day.—Jesus appears to Mary after the Resurrection.

*According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart,  
Thy comforts have given joy to my soul. (Psalm  
xciii. 19.)*

1. Holy Scripture tells us nothing of our Lord's appearance after His Resurrection to His Blessed Mother. It takes it for granted that He must have appeared first to her. He who doubts it has but a poor understanding of Mary's part in the work and life of Jesus. As she was first in sharing His sufferings, so she was of necessity first in being partaker of His joy.

2. How Mary had been longing and praying for the Resurrection! It is a pious belief that for her sake those three days were shortened. How eagerly she had been expecting the dawn of that first Easter Day! She had been saying over and over again to herself, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." She knew that the darkness would in God's time usher in a glorious morning. This should be my comfort when all seems dark. I, too, must pray and wait.

3. What a meeting must that have been! All her anguish, was more than compensated by the ecstasy of her joy at beholding her Divine Son, radiant with heavenly beauty, conqueror over hell and death. See how she falls at His feet in a rapture of delight! See how He raises her up with words of love! Who can tell the exquisite delight of hearing such words from Jesus' lips?

See the Mother's fond embrace,  
See her joy to view Thy face!  
When all bright in radiant bloom  
Thee she welcomed from the tomb.



## 28th Day.—Mary the Mother of the Infant Church.

*Her children rose up and called her blessed.*  
(Prov. xxxi. 28.)

1. When our Lord ascended into heaven, we are told that the apostles went back to Jerusalem with great joy (St. Luke xxiv. 52). But there was none of them so joyful as Mary. Her sacred heart overflowed with happiness and delight. The greatest possible joy for her was thus to witness the triumph of her Son and to hear the angels welcoming the King of glory to His throne in heaven.

2. Yet Mary's life must have been one long desire after Heaven, more so than ever after Jesus had ascended. Still she had no wish even for the Heavenly Paradise as long as it was God's will that she should remain on earth. She was quite content to wait. Am I resigned and patient when the will of God contradicts my inclinations and desires?

3. Why was Mary left on earth? To comfort and sustain, to instruct and advise the first disciples of Christ. None knew like her the secrets of His Sacred Heart; none had such an instinctive perception of what He would desire in the many doubts and difficulties that arose; none could impart such sweet consolation to the afflicted. How often the disciples in her beheld their Mother! In heaven she is still our comforter, adviser, guide.

The Mother sits all worshipful,  
With her majestic mien;  
The princes of the infant Church  
Are gathered round their Queen.

## 29th Day.—Mary's Death.

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.* (Psalm cxv. 15.)

1. During the years which succeeded our Lord's Ascension Mary had been making a progress in holiness and perfection which surpassed all that had gone before. She had become more and more a partaker of the Divine Nature, more and more like to the image of her Divine Son. What a contrast I am to Mary! Yet at least I can admire her and rejoice in her unspeakable perfections.

2. At length the time came when this soul, so exquisitely beautiful, was too beautiful for earth to detain her any longer. She had long been languishing with love—yearning after her Beloved. Her death was not like that which we call death. She had no sickness, no pain. She died simply of love, of her insatiate desire after God. Do I long after the presence of God, for the day when I shall behold Him face to face?

3. Why was Mary's death such a triumph, such a scene of peace and joy and heavenly consolation? Because she was sinless. The sting of death is sin. It was also because she had stood by her Son's death-bed of the Cross, and shared by her compassion in His agony. In return for this, Jesus Himself came to receive the sacred soul of His dear Mother. All the angels of heaven were present there, singing sweet melodies.

O happy, happy death!  
If death indeed could be,  
Blest Virgin, that sweet end  
Which God bestowed on thee.

### 30th Day.—Mary's Assumption into Heaven.

*Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption.* (Psalm xv. 10.)

1. On the third day after Mary's death, when the apostles gathered around her tomb, they found it empty. The sacred body had been carried up to the celestial Paradise. Jesus Himself came to conduct her thither; the whole court of heaven came to welcome with songs of triumph the Mother of the Divine Word. What a chorus of exultation! Hark how they cry, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the Queen of Glory shall enter in."

2. Why was Mary's body received into heaven instead of remaining in the earth, like the rest of mankind? The grave had no power over one who was immaculate. Her flesh could not see corruption. Her body had been overshadowed by the Holy Ghost; it had been the sacred temple in which had dwelt God Incarnate, and so it had a claim to ascend whither the Body of her Son had already gone before.

3. But the chief reason was that as she had shared in each detail in the sorrows and agony of her Son, so it was right that she should take part in His triumph. To her it was due that she should without delay enter into the joy of her Lord, her Son, her God. Oh, happy Mary! what were all her dolours compared with the joy of that first moment of heaven! How light are all our sorrows compared with the eternal weight of glory prepared for us!

See the Virgin Mother rise,  
Angels bear her to the skies!

### 31st Day.—Mary's Coronation as Queen of Heaven.

*The Queen stood upon Thy right hand in clothing of gold.*  
(Psalm xliv. 10.)

1. It was not enough that Mary should be received into heaven. She was to be no ordinary denizen of the celestial court. Mary was, by her perfect and unfailing conformity to the will of God throughout her life, raised to a pre-eminence to which none other of the saints could attain. By her co-operation in the Passion of her Son she had a dignity beyond the reach even of the highest of the archangels. Mary was to be crowned Queen of Heaven by the Eternal Father: she was to have a throne at her Son's right hand.

2. Mary, too, enjoyed a happiness different from that of all the other saints. All others knew that if they had been more faithful they might have been more full of happiness. Though their happiness is perfect, it is not perfect with the same perfection as Mary's. She possesses all that it was possible for God in the present order to bestow upon her. What must be her happiness now! short only of the infinite happiness of the Infinite God!

3. But Mary is not Queen of Heaven only for her own sake, but also for ours. Day by day, hour by hour, she is praying for us, obtaining graces for us, preserving us from danger, shielding us from temptation, showering down blessings upon us. She is our dear Mother as well as Queen of Heaven. How she loves us! What confidence we should have in her! Once more we will cry out:

Oh, Mary, conceived without sin!

Oh, Mary, Queen of Heaven!

Pray for us who have recourse to thee.



# **Veni Sancte Spiritus.**

SHORT MEDITATIONS FROM THE ASCENSION  
TO THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.



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## - 1.—Ascension Day.

### *The Return of the Apostles to Jerusalem.*

1. When the apostles had received from the angels the message respecting the future return of Jesus, slowly and in silence they left the spot where they had been gazing in ecstasy after their King and Lord : their thoughts in heaven, their hearts in heaven, where they knew that their Master was rejoicing at the right hand of God. They would fain have remained still looking up to the place whither He had gone before them. But they had learned the lesson of obedience, and without hesitation or delay they obeyed the angels' word.

2. How happy they were! their hearts brimful of joy and delight. Yet they had just lost Him Who would, they had hoped, reign as earthly King of Israel. They knew better now. They had learned the true meaning of His promises, and they were content, more than content, to wait for the day in the far future, when He should make His enemies His footstool, and reign over the whole earth, King of kings, Lord of lords. Am I content to wait for that joyous day, and to live in hope?

3. But the chief source of their happiness was the knowledge that He Whom they loved better than life itself had returned to the bosom of His Eternal Father. Theirs was an unselfish joy indeed! What mattered it if they had to suffer persecution and trouble, if Jesus had entered on the reward earned by His Passion and death? This should be the joy that I must aim at. I must rejoice at the victory of Jesus Christ, and triumph in His glory.

## 2.—Friday after the Ascension.

### *The Preparation for Pentecost.*

1. When the disciples returned to Jerusalem, they went back to the Cenacle, or upper room, where Our Lord had eaten the Pasch with them, and had instituted the Blessed Eucharist. There they spent the next eight days, according to their Master's instructions, in a retreat preparatory to Pentecost. Learn from this the importance of a quiet time alone with God as a condition of receiving from Him signal graces.

2. The disciples, we are told, were all of one mind. There was no jealousy now, no strife, no disagreement. Jesus had left His peace with them. They had learned the lesson of charity and submission; their constant desire was to yield to others, to minister to others. They had now all one heart and one soul, because one Lord, one faith, one end in life, one object of their ambition, to serve others for love of Him. This perfect harmony is the most certain means of drawing down the Holy Spirit. Do I seek to cultivate it among those with whom my lot is cast?

3. Joined to the disciples in their retreat were Our Lady and the holy women. The presence of Mary sanctified them. She was now their Mother. Christ Himself had entrusted them to her. She had become beneath the cross the Mother of the infant Church; they consulted her, learned from her some of the secrets of divine love that filled her soul, honored her with a reverence and a devotion which corresponded to their love for Jesus. O Mary, be thou with me, now and always, as my adviser, my hope, my Lady, and my Queen!

### 3.—Saturday after the Ascension.

#### *The Means employed.*

How did the disciples spend the time of their retreat? We are not left in ignorance here.

1. They were persevering in prayer. If there was one lesson which their Master had taught them again and again, it was the necessity of earnest, persevering, patient prayer. How He had enforced it by command, by parable, by His own example! They had learned the lesson, and now their instinct was to make prayer the chief preparation for the coming of the power from on high. It is prayer that obtains power for us—power over ourselves—power to convert others—wisdom and prudence and all we need.

2. They were always in the Temple. Not only constant at its services, but standing there for long hours in silent supplication. They knew that God was specially present there, and that His ears were specially open to their petitions. So we must be often before the Blessed Sacrament, visiting from time to time the temple where Jesus Himself is truly present. This is the way to obtain graces from Him. This is the way to win His Sacred Heart.

3. They were constantly praising and blessing God. Thus even before the Holy Spirit descended, they had begun to practise as far as they could the occupation of the saints and angels in heaven. They knew that the best form of prayer is an expression of gratitude and love. Yet how much cause they had for natural anxiety! What a battle, and apparently what a hopeless battle, before them! Their overflowing love made them full of hope and joy. God will always help those who are continually praising and blessing Him.

#### 4.—Sunday after the Ascension.

##### *The Gifts sought.*

##### I.—The Gift of Understanding.

1. What is the gift of understanding? It is the gift that enables him who receives it to appreciate the truth and beauty of all revealed truths, and to comprehend their drift and meaning. It is not like faith, a simple intellectual assent. It furnishes reasons for making the assent. It enables the intellect to perceive the consistency and the beauty of supernatural truth. I must pray for this gift if I am to be firm in my faith.

2. This gift of understanding extends also to practical matters. It gives the power of perceiving the wisdom of what is done by those in authority, and in general of appreciating what is good in the actions of others. This is the reason why good men always judge so leniently and kindly of the actions of those around, and approve the decisions of authority where others condemn them. It is because they have so large a share of the gift of understanding.

3. Even after Our Lord's Resurrection, His disciples had shown a strange want of understanding of the meaning of His teaching. He Himself had reason to upbraid the eleven apostles with their incredulity and hardness of heart. He reproached the disciples on the road to Emmaus with their folly and slowness to believe the Scriptures. They needed the gift of understanding before they could see their true meaning. Without the teaching of the Holy Ghost, Scripture is a sealed book. Heretics may scratch at the surface, but they cannot make its treasures their own. For this the gift of understanding is necessary.

## 5.—Monday after the Ascension.

### II.—The Gift of Wisdom.

1. What is the gift of wisdom? It follows on the gift of understanding, and gives men a real taste and relish for all that is connected with God and divine things. It directs their thoughts straight to God, and teaches them to look at everything in the light of God. It makes them love prayer and spiritual reading, and holy Mass. It is the most perfect of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and rules and directs the rest as charity does the other virtues.

2. This gift of wisdom is exactly proportioned to our charity. In the saints it produces an utter indifference to all worldly things, to all the pleasures of sense and to all earthly honors; nay, it makes them love mortification and the cross, because their burning charity makes them appreciate the true value of suffering. My God, how little have I of this heavenly wisdom! How little taste for prayer and spiritual things! The reason is my selfishness, my want of charity.

3. In the gospels we notice how the apostles, in spite of Our Lord's example and teaching, took to the very end of His sacred ministry a low and earthly view of the kingdom He was come to establish, and of their own privileges in it. They thought that it was to be merely a temporal kingdom, that they were to be held in high honor in it, and actually quarrelled among themselves who should be first in it. All their tastes and aspirations were after this world's honor. This was because they had not yet that gift of wisdom which would teach them to relish most the things of God, but which they were to receive at Pentecost.

## 6.—Tuesday after the Ascension.

### III.—The Gift of Knowledge.

1. The gift of knowledge differs from the preceding gifts in that its province is to raise the soul from creatures to the Creator. It enables us to think of God in our daily life, and to make the things around occasions of recalling His presence. It teaches that all the beauty we see in earthly things is but a reflection of the divine beauty. It was in virtue of this that St. Ignatius declared that all the world around recalled God to him. Am I careful to refer all things to Him?

2. The possession of this gift of knowledge is necessary for the salvation of my soul. Those who rest in creatures and fail to pass from them to the Creator, can never hope to enjoy the vision in which the Creator is all in all. I must try and recognize God in all around me more than I do. I must pray for a knowledge of His perfections through the means which He has provided, the beauties of the physical world, the many virtues of the saints and holy people, from whom I can learn so much.

3. Those who were the companions of Our Lord could scarcely fail to be continually reminded of God while they were the associates of God Incarnate. Yet they did not fully recognize Jesus Christ as God, else they would never have doubted of His Resurrection. Their love for Him was rather a personal and natural one than the devotion due to Him as their Lord and their God. They did not judge rightly of the meaning of what He said and did. How often we are narrow in our views, impatient of what God ordains or permits, for want of this divine gift of knowledge!

## 7.—Wednesday after the Ascension.

### IV.—The Gift of Counsel.

1. The gift of counsel contains all that is good in human prudence, but goes beyond it. It depends simply and solely on the will of God, so far as we can ascertain it. It leads us always to pause and turn our thoughts to God before we act. Thus it enables us to avoid precipitation, rashness, inconsiderate impulse. It makes us calm and deliberate, and teaches us never to act in any important matter without seeking guidance from God.

2. Sometimes the gift of counsel does more than this. It shows us that it is God's will that we should run counter to what the world considers prudent. So Abraham did when he left his home at God's command. So David did when he went out with sling and stone to fight Goliath. So Judith did when she went to the camp of Holofernes. Some such occasions occur to all. When I know God's will, do I generously set all else aside?

3. The disciples of Our Lord do not seem to have had much of the gift of counsel during His life. St. Peter tried to dissuade Him from His sacred Passion. St. James and St. John wanted Him to call down fire upon the city which would not receive Him. The disciples in general stopped one who was working miracles in Christ's name. They rebuked those who brought their children to be blessed by Him. They wanted Our Lord to absent Himself from Judæa to avoid the dangers to which He was there exposed. All these were the result of trusting to human prudence instead of the supernatural gift of counsel.



## 8.—Thursday after the Ascension.

### V.—The Gift of Piety.

1. The gift of piety implants in the soul a loyal, tender, filial affection towards God as our Father. "You have received," says St. Paul (Rom. viii. 15), "the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)." This loyalty makes us forget self; it loves to serve God, not as a master, or even as a benefactor, but because it is a joy to us to obey our Father in heaven.

2. This spirit of loyalty which we thus receive from the Holy Spirit is one of the most powerful, exalted, all-embracing of motives. It puts us on our mettle, and engenders a chivalrous spirit of generous obedience. It is the true application of the proverb *Noblesse oblige*. If I am a son of God, loyal to my Father in heaven, how this thought should influence my every act and word and thought!

3. From the first moment that Our Lord called the apostles to follow Him, they had continually entertained a loyal and intense devotion to Him. They had also had the virtue of piety, by reason of which they loved God as their sovereign Lord. But neither of these was the gift of piety. The first was a personal affection to Our Lord in His sacred humanity; the second was a love for God founded upon the law, not upon the Gospel. The disciples of Our Lord had never fully realized the new obligation of filial affection that was the result of Our Lord's Incarnation, till after His Ascension. God had become their Father in a new sense, and the prayer they were taught by their Master insisted on this first of all. Do I at all realize it?

## 9.—Friday after the Ascension.

### VI.—The Gift of Fortitude.

1. The gift of fortitude in some degree is absolutely necessary to one who wants to save his soul. All Christians are called upon sometimes to endure for religion sufferings for which mere human courage will not suffice. Those who desire a high place in heaven are called to a hard struggle, and one quite impossible to us in our own strength. Any one may be called on to die for his faith; most are exposed on some occasion in their lives to ridicule, loss of friends, or contempt.

2. The gift of fortitude makes easy what would otherwise be difficult or impossible. It helps men to bear with fortitude sufferings otherwise unendurable. It makes feeble women endure torture with joy. It makes those naturally weak strong against all the assaults of Satan; it renders self-denial and self-sacrifice attractive. It sweetens suffering, and makes us content under pain and trouble. O heavenly gift! Grant it to me, O Christ my Lord!

3. The disciples of Our Lord exhibited during His life a curious mixture of courage and cowardice. St. Peter had great natural courage; so had St. John, who alone followed Our Lord throughout His sacred Passion. St. Joseph of Arimathæa and St. Nicodemus in their burial of Him were bold and generous. But on the other hand, there had been at the time of His Passion sad weakness. All had deserted Him in the garden when He was arrested. St. Peter had denied Him; the rest had hidden themselves in fear. Human courage can do little in the face of fierce temptation or sudden alarm. Perhaps I know this by my own experience.

## 10.—Saturday before Pentecost.

### VII.—The Gift of the Fear of the Lord.

1. The gift of fear includes not only that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, but a fear which is the completion and perfection of wisdom. It gives to him who receives it a continual dread of any kind of offence against God, even of sins committed thoughtlessly and without full deliberation. It is not a slavish, cowardly, frightened fear, but a loving, reverential, affectionate fear, founded on intense love. It is joined to perfect confidence in God, and flows from a joyful acknowledgment of His complete dominion.

2. The gift of fear produces an intense quickness of perception in the soul, so that we see our smallest faults, and lament over them. It makes us dread any approach to sin, anything that could leave the faintest stain upon the soul. It also produces a great fear of any unfaithfulness to grace in matters where there is no question of sin. Why have I so little of this gift? It is because my love is so faint and feeble. Why am I so blind to my faults? It is because I am so careless in guarding against them.

3. The fear of the Lord, says the Wise Man, is the beginning of wisdom, and from the very first those whom Our Lord chose to be His apostles and disciples had this fear already existing in their hearts. They had a reverential dread of the judgments of God. They had a fear of the wrath to come. But this preliminary fear was very different from the fully-developed gift they needed in order to be apostles of Christ to the world. We, too, if we are to be apostles of Christ to others, must have this gift of loving fear.

## 11.—Whit-sunday.

### *The Descent of the Holy Ghost.*

1. At length the retreat of the apostles was over, and they all assembled together to receive the gift that Our Lord had promised to send them after His departure from them. He had promised to ask the Eternal Father to send the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, in His name, to remain with them forever. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was to come in His seven-fold power, to dwell in the Church of God, and in the hearts of all its faithful members. What a wondrous gift! What a proof of the love of Jesus! He gave the best gift that heaven itself had to bestow. He gave them the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Son.

2. The Holy Spirit came like a mighty wind, but yet perceived by each and all. Unsearchable like the wind in no one being able to trace whence He comes and whither He goes, sweeping away all the miasmas of earth, purifying, refreshing, invigorating. Has He produced these effects in my soul? Have I asked Him to make me more pure and courageous and strong? Have I co-operated with His grace, or have I hindered His holy influences?

3. The Holy Spirit in coming filled the whole house where they had met together. So His presence extends to the whole Church. He speaks first through the Vicar of Christ, then through bishops and priests, and in subordination to their authority, to the individual soul. It is this universal gift that makes the Church of Christ no mere collection of individuals, but the living body of Christ, her divine Spouse. Thank God for the happiness of being a member of it.

## 12.—Whit-monday.

### *The Parted Tongues.*

At the same time that the sound of the mighty wind filled the whole house, there appeared something more wondrous still. Parted tongues of fire appeared, and descended on the head of each of the disciples who were present. Why did the Holy Spirit's presence manifest itself under the form of tongues?

1. Because they signified that to each would be given the office of speaking of the things of God, of communicating to others the truth that they had themselves learned. This was the sacred duty to which their whole lives were to be given. So now, on all priests, the same obligation rests, and, in their own degree, on all parents, teachers, all in authority, nay, on every one of the faithful. I, too, in Baptism, and still more in Confirmation, have received this obligation of communicating to those around me the sacred truths of the Gospel.

2. The tongues indicated that the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, either by His holy inspirations or by the voice of those who have authority to teach us. If I wish to speak and act prudently, I must take Him for my guide. Do I listen attentively to His voice, and obey most faithfully its holy utterances?

3. The tongues were also to remind us that it is our words which will obtain for us justification or condemnation at the day of judgment. Our Lord warns us that "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned." He does not say by our actions or our good intentions, but by our words. How often I forget this when I let loose my tongue in foolish and uncharitable words!

### 13.—Whit-tuesday.

#### *The Tongues of Fire.*

The tongues which came down from heaven and rested upon the disciples were tongues of fire. The fire had its own meaning.

1. It was a fulfilment of Our Lord's words, "I am come to send fire upon earth," a fire of charity such as had never been kindled before. He brought to man and taught to man a charity without bounds, ready to sacrifice itself even to the death; a charity which loved the sinner and the fallen because they were sinners and fallen; a charity which esteemed it a joy to suffer for others for Christ's sake. Is my charity of this kind? Is it a self-denying charity? Is it a charity which extends even to those whom I dislike?

2. This new fire was a purifying fire, driving out all sin, cleansing the soul of its dross. The fire of divine love has a power to consume the gnawing rust of selfishness, and indolence, and jealousy of the success of others. When its work is done, it leaves nothing of spiteful words and hard thoughts and unkind actions; nothing but the love of God remains behind. Purify me, O God, by the fire of Thy love.

3. This fire was also exceedingly bright. It was to communicate its attractive brilliancy to those on whom it descended, both collectively and individually. It is this bright fire of Pentecost that illuminates the Church, and makes it draw men of good will into it. How thankful should I be in that I dwell where the fire of Pentecost ever brightly burns! Around the priest there is a halo belonging to his sacred office; around each individual Catholic there is a light of faith which burns not outside the fold.

## 14.—Wednesday after Pentecost.

### *The Effects of Pentecost : the Gift of Languages.*

1. As Our Lord, when He became incarnate, brought down heaven to earth in His own sacred Person, so, after He returned to heaven, the Holy Ghost came to plant on earth a tree, the fruits of which were not only designed for the healing of the nations, but were to be a sort of commencement of the glory of the saints in paradise. Jesus Christ had fought the battle and won the victory, and now He sent the Holy Spirit to make the kingdoms of this world the kingdom of God.

2. These fruits are the graces of the Holy Spirit, some of them gifts given by God according to His good pleasure, apart from individual merits; others requiring man's co-operation, and imparting a new beauty to the individual soul. The Catholic Church is this tree, sprung from the blood of Jesus, planted by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, to take firm root, and never to be rooted up, in spite of all the hatred of the wicked and the malice of Satan. How many graces I have received through the Catholic Church!

3. The first of the graces of Pentecost was the power bestowed on the disciples of speaking so that all men, of every nation and tribe, understood them. They thus anticipated the universal language of heaven. Each one heard his own tongue. To each, therefore, as it seemed, the words of the apostles were specially directed. "We all hear them speak in our own tongues." The gift of speaking words suitable to all alike is a great grace. God gives to His faithful servants the power of speaking to the hearts of all, so that all can say, "This is meant for me."

## 15.—Thursday after Pentecost.

### *The Effects of Pentecost : the Power of Healing.*

1. Our Lord had promised that the works that He had done on earth, those who believed in Him should do also (St. John xiv. 12). Among these works was the power to raise the dead and to heal the sick. Those on whom the Spirit of God descended performed miracles which even their adversaries could not deny. These miracles still continue; they are the exclusive property of the Catholic Church; they are one of the proofs of the continual presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank God for this, and make an act of faith in the wonder-working power of the Church.

2. The first miracle performed by the apostles was the healing of the lame man at the gate of the Temple. He who had been a helpless cripple came walking, and leaping, and praising God. The fact of the miracle was undeniable. "It is manifest," said the council of the Jews, and we cannot deny it." They were more honest than modern sceptics, who explain away miracles for which the evidence is just as strong. Pray that you may have none of the sceptical spirit that is so hateful to God.

3. This miracle was worked in the name of Jesus by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in fulfilment of Our Lord's promise, "He shall glorify Me." All true miracles are wrought by the authority and in the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We shall do wonderful things for God if all we do is done in Jesus' name and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We fail because we act in our own name and under our own guidance.



## 16.—Friday after Pentecost.

### *The Effects of Pentecost: the Commission to Teach.*

The result on the apostles themselves of the descent of the Holy Spirit was that they at once began to proclaim to others the doctrines of Jesus Christ. They could not keep silence. The Holy Ghost dwelling within them spoke through their mouth. Hence they had—

1. *Authority in speaking.* On all who listened to them there came a strange awe. It was not poor, ignorant men whose words were listened to, but a divine power speaking through them, carrying with it the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is why Catholic priests have an influence no ordinary man possesses. They have authority to teach from God. With what reverence, then, should we listen to them, for their sacred office's sake!

2. *Power to convince.* It was impossible to resist the force of the apostles' arguments. They spoke of the things they had seen and heard. Man is born for truth, and God gives him the power of instinctively recognizing truth. Truth has always a strong attraction for men of good will. If I am such, I shall accept with a joyful spirit of loyalty every truth that the Church teaches.

3. *Force to persuade.* It would not have been enough if the apostles had power to convince the intellect. The heart must be reached, the will moved to action. This was the effect of St. Peter's first sermon. They that heard it had compunction in their heart, and said to the apostles, What shall we do? Am I moved by sermons, good books, etc., to do more for Christ? And do I carry out what God suggests to me?

## 17.—Saturday after Pentecost.

### *The Effects of Pentecost: the Change in the Apostles themselves.*

Hitherto we have been dealing with the results of Pentecost on the apostles in their official character as messengers of Christ, commissioned to preach the Gospel in all the world. We must now see the change worked in their own souls.

1. They who before had been narrow, selfish, and ready to condemn others now became full of an overflowing charity to all the world. Into their hearts the spirit of love had descended. Their motto henceforth was: *Caritas Christi urget nos*—the charity of Christ is the one motive of all we think, and do, and say. What shall separate us from the love of Christ?

2. They who before were timid, irresolute, almost cowardly, now became as bold and as brave as lions. They challenged the Jewish authorities with a freedom of speech that the chief priests were unable to explain, until they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. They faced the wrath of the Sanhedrin undismayed. "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye." Have I the same boldness in advocating the cause of God and His Church, and the same superiority to human respect?

3. They who before had shrunk from suffering now courted suffering, and faced death with joy, by reason of the spirit of love, which engendered in them an invincible fortitude, and made them regard it as a privilege to suffer for Christ's sake. How little have I of this spirit! How unwilling am I to suffer! How prone to avoid all that is opposed to my natural inclinations!

## 18.—Trinity Sunday.

### *The Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.*

† 1. On the octave of Pentecost we celebrate the most mysterious and the most unsearchable of all the mysteries of faith. How God can be Triune, three Persons in one God, altogether exceeds human comprehension. Even under the light of faith we have to bow our heads, and confess the inability of the reason to grasp the divine mystery. Make an act of faith in this mystery, and pray for a humble, child-like, submissive faith.

† 2. Yet this mystery is not contrary to human reason. There is nothing in it that reason revolts against, no contradiction, nothing that we can call impossible. On the contrary, the denial of it, not the assertion of it, ultimately leads to a contradiction. Thank God that you profess a faith which presupposes the full exercise of human reason, and is perfectly consistent with reason, instead of being a member of one of those various sects and false religions which ultimately lead those who profess them into an absurdity.

† 3. Although the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is beyond the grasp of created intellect, yet those to whom God has vouchsafed in large measure the gift of understanding see something of its truth, and glory, and harmony, and necessity in the supernatural order. To the saints it has a simplicity which is the effect of the divine light that illumines their souls. They penetrate farther than ordinary men into this deepest of all mysteries, and this because of their exalted sanctity. If the truths of Revelation are difficult to us, may it not be, in part at least, due to our own faults?

## 19.—Monday after Trinity Sunday.

### *God the Father.*

1. The first Person of the Blessed Trinity is the primeval fount whence all else proceeds. "Of Him are all things," says St. Paul (Rom. xi. 36). From Him proceed the Divine Word and the Holy Ghost. God the Father is first of the Three Persons, not in the order of existence, since all exist from all eternity, nor in order of dignity, since all are equal, but in order of origin. I, too, am from Him. The Eternal Father has deigned to fashion me. I owe my existence to Him. I depend upon Him in my every movement. In His presence, how can I venture to be independent?

2. To the First Person of the Holy Trinity is especially appropriated the *power* of God. It was by an exercise of His power that He created the world. His almighty power alone sustains it in being. All the angels are completely subject to His power, and even those who hate Him are utterly helpless in any attempt to resist Him. It is no want of power that causes God to permit the devils to fight against Him; it is in the interest and for the benefit of His saints and servants.

3. The thought of this power of God is very comforting when all seems to go wrong, and the Church is persecuted, and all kinds of accusations are brought against her, and her Supreme Head is robbed of his children by the enemy. In times of weakness we should ever remember the omnipotence of God. The day will come when all His enemies will be made His footstool. Do I rely as I ought on the power of God, and leave myself in His hands, to do with me as He sees fit?

## 20.—Tuesday after Trinity Sunday.

### *God the Son.*

1. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity proceeds from the Father by an eternal generation. As the coequal and coeternal Son, He is, as it were, the model or pattern whose divine and infinite perfections are reflected in the works of God. By Him, as Creator of the world, the whole of this physical universe was made. "By Him are all things," says St. Paul. By Him, in the unity of the Father, is the Holy Ghost Himself. Adore this mystery, which surpasses our limited understanding, and pray for a firm faith.

2. To the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is appropriated the *wisdom* of God. He is continually spoken of in Holy Scripture under the name of Wisdom, or the Word of God. It was thus the wisdom of God that caused Him to become man. For us He was made foolishness. For us He emptied Himself, not only of His glory, but in the eyes of men He lacked that wisdom which is His special prerogative.

3. It was by the Divine Word that all things were created. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made." Hence, all created things are framed by the Wisdom of God, and are made after His likeness. We ought to respect all things in proportion as they reflect the divine perfections, even the flowers and the beasts of the field, and above all man, who bears the image of the Son of God.

## 21.—The Eve of Corpus Christi.

### *God the Holy Ghost.*

1. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the end to which all things tend. He is the Spirit of holiness, and holiness is but another name for likeness to God. And as the end of man is to be conformed to the image of God, in the Holy Ghost all things find their end and their perfection. "In Him are all things," says St. Paul. Am I advancing steadily in this likeness to God which is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

2. To the Holy Spirit is appropriated the *love* of God. He is nothing else than the mutual Love of the Father and the Son. From them the Holy Spirit proceeds, not only *in virtue of* the love of the Eternal Father for the Word, and of the Word for the Eternal Father, but as *identical with* that love. Thus it is that God is love, and he who dwells in supernatural charity for others truly dwells in God the Holy Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit is the author of all the gifts of God to His Church. When Our Lord ascended, the Holy Spirit came to take His place to lead men into all truth, to dwell in their hearts, to fill them with the fire of His love. All the supernatural gifts in the Church, all the miracles, all the graces, come to us from the Holy Spirit of God. In the Church He is ever present, and with it He will always remain. He is present in each of the faithful united to God by supernatural charity. Come, then, O Holy Spirit, and pour into my heart Thy gifts of love!

## 22.—The Feast of Corpus Christi.

### *The Triumph of Humility.*

1. One of the most magnificent of all public ceremonies in Catholic countries is the procession on the feast of Corpus Christi. The faithful strain every nerve to show the Blessed Sacrament the greatest possible honor by every kind of external symbol of veneration and love. It is indeed a triumphal procession; music and singing, flowers and lights; triumphal arches and richly-decorated altars are prepared for the King of kings. Rejoice in all these honors shown to your Lord and God.

2. Why is this day chosen out for this peculiar honor? Why is the altar more gaily dressed and more brilliantly lighted than at any other season? It is because God thus rewards the infinite condescension of His Eternal Son. Because Jesus humbled Himself to death, His sacred humanity is now exalted in heaven. Because He humbled Himself still more by taking the form of bread, He is greeted on Corpus Christi day with the jubilant gratitude of those amongst whom He deigns to dwell in this apparent annihilation of all His majesty. How can I ever thank Him enough for this astonishing mercy?

3. Thus it is that God shows His appreciation of humility and self-abasement. The lower we stoop for God's sake, the higher He will raise us. Yet how little I have of this spirit! I dislike to be humbled, and want to show off my own excellence, and to pretend to a dignity which I do not possess. I dislike it if any virtue I think I possess is overlooked, and if I am treated as of no account. O Lord Jesus, make me more like to Thee!

## 23.—Friday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *The Motive of Jesus in the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament.*

1. What was the motive which induced Our Lord to hide Himself under the form of a little piece of bread? In His life on earth He had drunk to the dregs of the cup of humiliation, and when His sufferings were over, the time of His exaltation had come. He was to sit forever at the right hand of His Father. He had fought the battle and won the victory, and trampled upon Satan's head. It seemed unbecoming to His divine majesty that He should descend so low.

2. If it was unbecoming to His majesty, says St. Bernard, it was not unbecoming to His love. Love is strong as death, and Our Lord's love for us was far stronger than death. With divine ingenuity He had devised a way of satisfying His love that enabled Him to render His sacrifice a continual one, which should last to the end of the world, and by which He should die mystically for us each day upon the altar. He offered one sacrifice for sins *forever*. It is not something past and gone, a mere recollection of His love in the past. It is an ever-present memorial of His eternal love. Would that I could realize more this unceasing, undying love of Christ for me!

3. Each consecrated Host in itself represents the death of Christ. He is present there, motionless, helpless, silent, giving no more sign of life than when His sacred body was enclosed in the tomb. He has made Himself thus helpless for love of me. He has once more emptied Himself of all His glory to teach me that even the King of heaven gives His best gift to men by an infinite humiliation of Himself.



## 24.—Saturday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *Further Proofs of Jesus' Love for us.*

1. Our Lord is not satisfied with mystically dying for us day by day upon the altar. He in His incredible love must go still further. He must remain in every church all the day and all the night, unable, so to speak, to tear Himself away from those He loves. In spite of all man's base ingratitude and cruel neglect, He still cries out, with that insatiable ardor of His love, "My delight is to be with the sons of men." Was there ever love like His?

2. But His love has not yet exhausted itself. With an extravagant generosity passing our powers of comprehension, He has determined to give Himself to be His children's food, and, in so doing, to give them at the same time eternal life. As He Himself says, "He that eateth Me shall live by Me." He desires to unite Himself to us in bonds of the closest union. He desires to be wholly ours, that we may thus become wholly His. Who save a God would ever have devised such a means as this of satisfying His love?

3. What, too, was involved in the adoption of this means? How many frightful insults and outrages inflicted on Him! How many sacrilegious Communions! Sometimes the trampling under foot of the sacred Host, sometimes still more terrible profanation! Jesus knew to what He was rendering Himself liable when He chose this means of showing His love, and deliberately chose it. O my Jesus, how can I ever love Thee as I ought in return for such love as this!

## 25.—Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *The Return of Love for Love.*

1. We all of us shrink from the charge of ingratitude. Whatever else we may be, we flatter ourselves that we are not ungrateful, that we love those who love us, and seek to repay our benefactors with affection and gratitude, if not with some positive and substantial return for all they have done for us. I should not like to be deemed ungrateful. I should resist the imputation of ingratitude. Yet can I say that I am grateful to Christ Jesus for all His wonderful love to me?

2. True gratitude aims at returning like for like. It is not content to be outdone in generosity. It seeks, if possible, to repay with greater favors the favors shown to it. If I desire to be generous, what sort of return ought I to make to Christ my Lord for giving Himself to me in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? Can I ever do enough for Him in return for what He has done for me? What sacrifice that I can make is more than an infinitesimal part of what I ought to do for Him?

3. Gratitude requires of us that if we cannot surpass our benefactor in liberality, we should at least be on a level with him. Is it possible ever to come up to the generosity of Jesus Christ in humbling Himself for my sake to the form of a little piece of bread? If for millions of years I were to sacrifice to Him health, comfort, reputation, I should still not have done a million-millionth part of all He has done for me. What can I do? I can simply tell Him that I will give Him myself and all I have, and that I would fain give more.

## 26.—Monday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *Grace increased by the Blessed Sacrament.*

1. Our Lord's desire to be with us and to unite us to Himself cannot be for His own sake. It is simply in order to promote our happiness that He has instituted the Blessed Sacrament. He loves to see His children happy, and His one object in the sacrament of His love is that He may have the happiness of seeing us happy. It was for this that He instituted the Blessed Eucharist; it is for this that He continues to abide in the tabernacle and to give Himself to us. What greater proof can He give us than this of His devoted love and unselfish generosity?

2. But how does the Blessed Sacrament promote our happiness? It is the means appointed by Almighty God to increase in us continually that sanctifying grace on which our happiness in heaven depends. Each time we receive holy Communion in good dispositions, this wondrous channel of grace pours fresh grace into our hearts, makes us more beautiful in God's sight, more fit for the company of the angels and saints in heaven. How greatly, then, ought I to value holy Communion!

3. The Blessed Sacrament does more than this. It also of itself obtains for us actual graces. Those who often receive holy Communion have more inspirations from Almighty God, and more help to avail themselves of them. Each such inspiration, if accepted, will add to our happiness both here and in heaven to all eternity. Especially after receiving it, God gives actual graces that He does not give at other times, and inspirations enabling us to know and do His will. While Jesus is our guest, present within us, He cannot refuse to give us all we ask.

## 27.—Tuesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *Sin blotted out by the Blessed Sacrament.*

What is it that hinders our happiness and our union with God? Naught else but sin. If sin could be taken away, all misery would disappear with it. If Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament desires to make us happy, it follows that our past sins are thereby blotted out, and the power of sin weakened or destroyed. How does it do this?

1. It excites in us acts of contrition and love, and each such act helps to cleanse our souls from sin. A perfect act of love is incompatible with any deliberate attachment even to any venial sin, and every act of love diminishes the attachment and washes away the guilt. Hence remember to make many acts of contrition and of love in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and whenever you receive holy Communion.

2. Moreover, whenever we receive holy Communion in good dispositions, the mere fact of worthy reception has the same effect. Even if anything hindered us from acts of love and contrition, the fact of the presence of Our Lord cancels sin, and helps to remove the obstacle that it places in the way of our love for God. What a reason this is for frequent Communion!

3. In both these ways, by the mere fact of reception and the acts of contrition and love which it engenders in us, holy Communion also takes away the temporal punishment of sin, and shortens the time of our purgatory. Each good Communion of itself blots out some of the penalty still due to God's justice. How wonderful are the effects of holy Communion! How grateful we should be for it!

28.—Wednesday within the Octave of  
Corpus Christi.

*The Effects of Holy Communion.*

The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is not only a remedy for sin in the past, but also a preventive of sin in the future.

1. It gives strength against temptation. It is essentially the food of the strong; the food that imparts strength even to the weakest. We need not be discouraged by our own weakness while we have such a resource as this. It will enable us to overcome every possible temptation. God puts a weapon into our hands with which we must needs conquer. Do I make use of it as I ought?

2. It also allays concupiscence. It is the great remedy against luxury and impurity. It takes away the overwhelming force with which the allurements of the flesh attack us, and gives us power to resist them, however violent they may be. Frequent Communion is sometimes the only means of saving a man from falling into grievous sin. Thank God for giving us so effective a means of keeping faithful to Him.

3. It also curbs and checks the assaults of the devil. Those who commit sin at other times are often entirely free from his attacks on the day when they receive holy Communion. Sometimes, indeed, the day of Communion brings with it stronger temptations; but when this is so, grace enough, and more than enough, is given to insure a complete victory. Trust, then, in holy Communion with implicit confidence, and you will never have any grievous falls, if you are vigilant and do your part.

## 29.—Octave of Corpus Christi.

### *The Chief Ends of Holy Communion.*

1. The Blessed Eucharist is above all the sacrament of love. It is not only the abiding proof of Our Lord's incredible love for us, but the chief means by which we are enabled to do something to return love for love. In it we can show our love to God by offering to Him a sacrifice which is far more pleasing to Him than all the sacrifices which the whole of mankind can offer—the sacrifice of His divine Son. This we can do each time we hear Mass. This we can do still more when we receive holy Communion and offer ourselves to Christ, Who is our guest, as a mark of our love to God.

2. The Blessed Eucharist is also primarily and above all a fount of love within us. As oil nourishes fire, so does holy Communion nourish our love to God. As fire without fuel soon becomes faint and dim, so our love cannot remain bright and strong unless its flame is fed with the fuel of the body and blood of Christ Our Lord. As He Himself says: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

3. The Blessed Eucharist is also a fount of love to man. Whence do the saints derive their supernatural charity, if not from holy Communion? What else made them patient, meek, forbearing, loving, kind, self-sacrificing? Was it not Jesus, Who comes to dwell with them, and Who gave them the commandment that they should do for others what He had done for them? Do I derive from holy Communion this all-embracing charity?



# **The Sacred Heart of Jesus.**

SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR JUNE.





## PREFACE.

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A LITTLE book of Meditations on the Sacred Heart needs no introduction. The subject is one that appeals to all—to sinners who long for better things, to those who are struggling along the road to heaven, often with faint hearts and weary steps, as well as to those who are closely united to Our Lord in the bonds of mutual love.

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart is one that has been reserved in its fulness for these later days, when the Church has to do battle not so much against open persecution as against indifference and pride and corroding scepticism. Against these there is no remedy like that which Jesus Himself taught us: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

*Easter, 1889.*



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## **The Claims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**

1. The Sacred Heart of Jesus calls for our devotion more than all other symbols of His love. It is not only the symbol of His love, it is the very source of that love. It is itself an unfathomable ocean of love which can never be exhausted. When the spear had drawn forth from it the mingled blood and water, there still remained the love with which it loved us and will love us to the end.

2. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, though a true human heart, is nevertheless, at the same time, the Heart of God. As such it calls for that supreme homage that is due to God alone. This is true of every part of Our Lord's Body, and of His Heart, if it were possible, even more than of the rest, inasmuch as it is the organ of that love which is the central attribute of God. To the Sacred Heart of Jesus I will cry: "My God and my Lord! Behold how He loved me!"

3. It has been sometimes said that Our Lord died of a broken heart, and in one sense it is true. It was the yearning love of His Heart over sinners, and the anguish at the thought of how many would reject that love which caused Him to shed His Heart's Blood for those whom He thus loved. St. Francis used to say: "My love was crucified!" and in imitation of Him we will say: "My Love had His Heart pierced with love of me."

## **The Love of the Sacred Heart for Man.**

1. The world has never witnessed such love as the love of the Sacred Heart for fallen man. The tenderest, fondest earthly love fades away and becomes as nothing in comparison with the love of Jesus. It combines in itself the love of the most devoted friend, of the most affectionate brother, of the lover for his beloved, of the mother for her darling son. Every form of love is united in the yearning love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. There never was a love so patient, so much-enduring as the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It puts up with neglect, coldness, nay, even outrage and insult. Any earthly friend or lover, nay, even the fond mother, would long ago have been repelled by such treatment as He receives from ungrateful man. But not so Jesus. Can a woman forget her infant, He asks, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? Even if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee.

3. The love of Jesus is a love which shows itself in deeds. He delights to pour out the treasures of His mercy on men, even on the ungrateful and on His enemies, and how much more on those who return Him love for love? For them there is no end to His gifts of love. Every day, every hour, some fresh favor and benefit, and all these only preliminary to the eternal reward He has prepared for them in heaven. How generous He has been to me, and what have I been in return?

## The Characteristics of the Love of the Sacred Heart.

How does the love of the Sacred Heart differ from the love God bears us? Does it add anything to the Divine love entertained for us by our Father in heaven? Yes, it has certain characteristics impossible to the uncreated nature of the Infinite God.

1. It is a *human* love. It is the Heart of One who is really and truly man. Hence the love of His Heart is that of a heart that beats with pulsations like ours. It has all that belongs to human love raised to an almost impossible intensity by reason of the Divinity to which it is joined. What confidence ought we to have in Christ our Brother, whose love for us is human as well as Divine!

2. It is a *sensible* love. Just as we see through our eyes, and hear through our ears, so we love through our hearts. The heart is the organ of love. It *feels* affection and is physically influenced by it. It has strong emotions and now rejoices, now sorrows. He is *touched* with the feelings of our poor infirmities. Human joy and sorrow thrilled through His Sacred Heart while He was on earth. His Heart still rejoices over His children, and still mystically sorrows for their sins.

3. It is a love of *sympathy*. The Sacred Heart has itself experienced all that we suffer. Each misery has its echo there. Jesus not only understands all our troubles, but each has been felt by Him in His own person. What a relief to have one who always has for us unlimited sympathy!



## **The Sacred Heart formed in Mary's Womb.**

1. Time was when there was no Heart of Jesus burning with love for men. God loved men, pitied them, perfectly understood human treachery and human misery, but not from personal experience of it. Before Jesus came mankind were hurrying down to hell. Reflect on the hopeless condition of the heathen world, and thank God from your heart that you did not live then. Would you not have been among the worst?

2. But God had long looked down with pity on the earth's darkness. The Word was made flesh, and in taking to Himself flesh He necessarily took a human heart glowing with love for every child of Adam, sorrowing with their sorrows, moved by their distress, rejoicing in their happiness, craving for their love, wounded by their unkindness. It was from the first moment of the Incarnation, when Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost, that the Sacred Heart of Jesus first began to throb with unspeakable love for fallen man.

3. In that first instant of its existence the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in virtue of the Divine personality to which it was inseparably united, embraced in its Divine compassion all the sorrows of men as long as the world should last. My troubles and sorrows were not overlooked. From that time until the end the Sacred Heart has been sympathizing, and will continue to sympathize with all that gives me joy or sorrow. O wondrous love of God made man!

## The First Worshippers.

1. When the Angel's message came to Mary, and she had accepted the Divine decree, she became conscious of the presence in her womb of the Incarnate God, in whose Sacred Heart was centred His love for fallen man. What was her prevailing sentiment in contemplating this mystery of Divine compassion? We know it from her own words. She desired that her heart should humbly coöperate with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that she, in the lowly capacity of His handmaid, should be allowed to take her share in the work He had come to do.

2. There was another present who joined with Mary in her submission, in her gladness, in the union of her will with God's. Gabriel, before he departed from her, humbly adored his Incarnate God, doing reverence to that Sacred Heart of Jesus, and rejoicing in the Divine decree that was to be the means of filling up the places in heaven of those who had fallen from their high estate.

3. A few days passed, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus received from another the testimony of his recognition and his joy. The unborn infant in Elizabeth's womb leaped with delight within his mother's womb, and received from the Sacred Heart the gift of being freed from the stain of sin and clad in the robe of justice. To me, too, the Sacred Heart offers the same happiness, if only I choose to avail myself of it!

## **The Earliest Pulsations of the Sacred Heart.**

1. What was the first thought that flashed through the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Naught else than an act of complete and absolute submission to the holy will of God: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God," and a joy in the prospect of living for no other end than this: "I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Here is the foundation of all holiness—perfect conformity to the Divine will. Yet, how rare it is! How sadly wanting in my sinful heart!

2. What was the second thought following close on this, and, in a manner, one with it? It was an acceptance of the special work God had sent Him to do. God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved. He received with joy the task of the world's redemption, though He knew full well all it would cost Him. I shall never tread in the footsteps of Jesus until I learn by the sacrifice of myself to imitate His Sacred Heart.

3. The will of God thus recognized, the Sacred Heart conceived at once an intense love for each and all of those whom He had come to redeem. They were entrusted to Him by His Eternal Father, they were His brethren, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, and His Heart went out towards them with the yearning of an intense affection. He yearned for the happiness and salvation of each with a Divine longing. He yearned then and yearns now for my happiness. Courage, then, faint heart, and think of the love of the Heart of Jesus for thee!

## **The Sacred Heart at Bethlehem.**

1. Mary, when about to bring forth her first-born Son, could find no shelter at Bethlehem, and had to take refuge in the cave which served as a stable for the oxen. Meanwhile, the Sacred Heart of Jesus was experiencing, even before His birth, the sort of treatment that He was to receive all His life long. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. It is the same now: He begs for admittance now as then. Mary and Joseph are still His faithful companions; but Jesus, Mary, and Joseph still ask in vain for admittance. O my Jesus! have I ever refused to open when Thou hast called by the secret whisper of Thy grace?

2. While the Sacred Heart is grieved by the ingratitude and discourtesy of the inhabitants of Bethlehem, He is grieved, too, by the thought of the misery which is to come upon them when Herod murders all the children in Bethlehem and the country around, and He destines for them a rich reward. So now He grieves with every bereaved mother, with every suffering child, and delights to carry the little ones in His arms to heaven.

3. In the stable Christ is born, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus becomes the centre of worship for the faithful souls who gather round the manger. The shepherds come to adore the new-born Infant: His Heart rejoices in their simplicity. The Magi come from afar with their triple offerings, and He blesses them and raises them to a higher than earthly royalty. Above all, Joseph and Mary kneel before their Son and their God. His Heart basks in their burning love. I will fancy myself kneeling there and offering myself to Jesus.

## The Sacred Heart at Nazareth.

1. Look into the little cottage at Nazareth, and behold the fairest of all the children of men nestling on His holy Mother's breast. How those two hearts beat in perfect unison! Mary's Immaculate Heart receiving from the Heart of Jesus a stream of grace that flowed on continually without let or obstacle. Jesus, in turn, rejoicing with unspeakable joy at the only heart that satisfied His longings and fulfilled His hopes. Oh that my heart were, in this, more like Mary's!

2. Look at the humble workshop attached to the cottage at Nazareth, and see Jesus in His early youth working under Joseph's direction. He is just at the age when boys begin to assert their liberty and independence, and who had more right to liberty and independence than the King of heaven and earth? Yet Jesus is subject to Joseph with blind obedience. His Heart is in love with subjection; it is a joy to the Creator to obey one of His creatures. Shall we not love subjection after such an example?

3. Look once again at Jesus amid the children of His own age. Sometimes He is talking to them, and they listen, spell-bound, to the words of the carpenter's Son. Sometimes He is taking the lead in their innocent games. But most often He is consoling them in trouble, encouraging the down-hearted. How unselfish even in childhood! how kind, how thoughtful! Oh that I were more like Him in this!

## **The Sacred Heart during Our Lord's Public Life.**

1. In the public ministry of Our Lord the wonderful attractiveness of the Sacred Heart cannot fail to strike even the surface reader of the Gospels. He drew all men to Him and made them forget all else. A crowd of seven thousand followed Him into the desert, and preferred to faint with hunger rather than leave Him. A woman, who was a sinner, braved the taunts and jeers of the guests at a banquet to throw herself at His feet. For those who have good-will Jesus has the same attractiveness now. I may test my good-will by seeing whether I am drawn to Him.

2. What was the secret of this attractiveness? It was not His Divine beauty, or His eloquence, or His majesty of mien. It was His overflowing, unbounded love, manifesting itself in every word. All who listened to Him could not help saying, "He loves me fondly, tenderly, and the one desire of His Heart is to lead me to better things, to save me from my miseries. It is just the same now. His Sacred Heart still yearns over me, and desires to raise me to better things.

3. Yet He was not attractive to all. Some He repelled; they were ill at ease in His presence and longed to get rid of Him. They had a positive aversion for Him and were afraid of Him. Who were these? They were the men of bad will. The self-sufficient, the self-willed, the lovers of sin. There is nothing that so destroys the attractiveness of Jesus as any sin loved and indulged. Is there any such in me?

## **The Sacred Heart of Jesus among His Apostles.**

1. If Our Blessed Lord poured forth the treasures of His Sacred Heart upon all among whom He dwelt, His twelve apostles received a share corresponding to the place of privilege that they occupied. In the prayer He offered to His Eternal Father before His Passion they occupy a special place. "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as We also are." The Sacred Heart yearned over them. I, too, am bound to Christ by the wonderful graces He has given me. He means me, too, in my sphere to be an apostle of His Sacred Heart. What a happiness for me, and what a claim on His love.

2. We observe, too, Our Lord's exceeding patience with the apostles. They were selfish, narrow, perverse, incredulous. Yet, how He forbore with them! With what unspeakable gentleness He put up with all their faults! Never a harsh word or angry look. I must try to copy the Sacred Heart in this when others try my temper by their perverseness or their dulness. I must be gentle with them for Jesus' sake.

3. The apostles enjoyed the inestimable privilege of being for three years the constant companions of Jesus. Yet at the Last Supper He speaks as if He were indebted to them for their society. "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations, and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom." So Christ Our Lord will one day thank us for our poor services, and treat us as if He were indebted to us. Christ my debtor for His love to me! Yet it is a fact of the Divine love.

## The Dignity of the Sacred Heart.

1. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, though it is a true human heart, yet it is not the heart of any human person. His human nature subsists in His Divine personality. Hence His Sacred Heart has the dignity which belongs, in virtue of His Divine nature, to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It is, so to speak, absorbed in the glory of the Divinity, though without losing its character of a true human heart, just as a piece of iron does not cease to be iron because it glows with the heat of the fire into which it is plunged. Rejoice in the glory of the Sacred Heart, and adore the Divinity which dwells there.

2. The Sacred Heart is also bound up in the closest union with the Divine nature of Jesus Christ. It is endowed with divine qualities which flow into it from the Godhead. It has authority without limit over the hearts of men. They are all its subjects whom it has the right to command. It has in itself the power of working miracles. It loves God as only those can love Him who see Him face to face.

3. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus are centred all the supernatural powers which the nature of man is capable of possessing. The Sacred Heart of Jesus shares the Divine prerogative of unbounded mercy. As from the sun flow light and heat, so from the Heart of Jesus flow all possible supernatural graces. What glory, then, of saint or angel can be compared to one ray of glory from the Sacred Heart?



## **The Sanctity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**

1. The sanctity of the Sacred Heart is the sanctity of One who is God as well as man. The Sacred Heart of Jesus hates sin as God hates it, loathes it with inexpressible loathing. How, then, can I, who am so full of sin, venture to appeal to the Heart to which sin is thus foul with a foulness that knows no bound or limit? At least I can pray that I may share in a greater degree this hatred of sin, and so learn to avoid it.

2. Happily for us the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by reason of the Divine nature of Our Lord, has also unbounded love for sinners. His infinite sanctity makes Him long after them with an inexhaustible love and an unceasing desire to see them rid of the sin that defiles them. If sins still cling to me it is not His fault, but my own. It is owing to my want of correspondence to His constant invitations to come to Him to be healed of all sin.

3. There is also communicated to the Sacred Heart a boundless store of created graces of the same kind as those bestowed on us, but immeasurably higher in degree. In this store is contained the grace necessary for every need, and among them the special graces which I need, and which are there ready to flow into my soul if I put no hindrance in the way.

## **The Compassion of the Sacred Heart.**

Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer with us as well as for us. Every sort of suffering has a claim on His Divine compassion.

1. He has the most intense compassion for those who are suffering any earthly sorrow. None appreciates as He the utter loneliness of the mother who has lost her son ; of the friend who is separated from one who was dear as life itself. At the tomb of Lazarus and at the gates of Naim He manifested His tender sympathy with sorrow. To Him, then, we will have recourse when earthly shadows press hard upon us.

2. He has a still greater compassion for those who have separated themselves from God by sin, and who are desirous to be freed from the chain that has bound them down, and to return to their Father in heaven. What countless, boundless graces flow from His Sacred Heart to help them in their difficulties! What sweetness thence proceeds to fill the heart of the sinner who does penance!

3. He has the greatest compassion of all for His servants and saints who are suffering for Him. How it grieves Him to witness their pains! What consolations He pours into their souls! What a reward He promises Himself to give them for what they have endured for love of Him! It is indeed of all privileges the greatest to earn the sympathy of the Sacred Heart by suffering for the cause of Christ.

## The Chief Desires of the Sacred Heart.

1. While Our Lord was upon earth, He several times expressed to His apostles what He had most at heart, and what was the work He had chiefly come to perform. He told them that He had come to send fire on the earth, and asked them what else they could expect Him to desire except that that fire should speedily be enkindled (St. Luke xii. 49). Yes, Jesus came to kindle on earth the fire of Divine love. Does this fire burn brightly in my heart, and do I fulfil His longing that it should be kindled more and more in me?

2. This fire was not merely the fire of love to God, it was also the fire of mutual charity amongst men. When Christ came, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, strife, was the order of the day. He came to spread charity, self-sacrifice, peace, mutual good will. Yet how faintly this flame burns in my cold heart! How much of selfishness and ill-feeling and petty jealousy still remains there!

3. This fire of love to God and man gives birth to another fire, which also consumes the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and burns in the hearts of all who love Him; the fire of zeal for souls and a desire to labor and suffer for them. How this fire burned in the hearts of the saints, of St. Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus Liguori. I must pray for more of that true zeal that animated the saints of God.

## The Excellence of the Sacred Heart.

1. The Sacred Heart of Jesus was the instrument of a human soul, which contained in it all the perfections, natural and supernatural, of which they are capable. It was the ideal of which the soul, even of the greatest of the saints, was but an utterly inadequate realization. Its sweetness, its gentleness, its power to attract, its Divine beauty was unbounded and almost infinite. Let us contemplate that Sacred Heart radiant with glory and splendor, and adore it with grateful love.

2. The Sacred Heart received all these perfections in order to dispense them to others. It overflows with graces; they proceed from it in copious streams to all who are willing to receive them. What beauty they impart to the soul that drinks in the stream of grace from that Heart! Every perfection of the Heart of Jesus is communicated to it in some degree, and renders it so beautiful that it is an object of admiration to God Himself.

3. Through the heart of man continually flows the blood that circulates throughout his body. Hence the precious Blood of Jesus flowed continually through His Sacred Heart. In that Blood what unbounded virtue! One drop is enough to cleanse the greatest sin, nay, the sins of the whole world. In that Heart there is the same virtue, and I, a sinner, can take refuge there, knowing that I shall be healed.

## **The Sacred Heart of Jesus among Sinners.**

1. One of the things at which the Pharisees took scandal during Our Lord's sacred ministry was His association with publicans and sinners. They taunted Him with His friendship for sinners. They asked His disciples why He ate and drank with them, talked to them words of gentleness and sympathy, seemed attracted by their company. Yes, it was all true. He was, above all, the Friend of sinners. He came to search them out and bring them back to the fold. He had a tender love for the miserable outcast because she was an outcast, and the compassion of His Sacred Heart went out towards her and longed to bring her back to purity and peace. Am I at all like to Jesus in His pity and love for sinners?

2. Once upon a time an unhappy woman was brought to Him who had been taken in adultery. She was a great sinner and deserved to die. But how did Jesus treat her? By silence He rebuked her accusers and then turned with Divine compassion to the poor adulteress, and spoke to her words of peace. Where should I have been, on the side of the accusers or on the side of Jesus?

3. Jesus is just the same now, the Friend of sinners and therefore my Friend. He is the Friend of sinners, and therefore woe to me if I am hard on others as the Pharisees were. He is the Friend of sinners, I can therefore win His love by showing great kindness and tenderness and love to these His friends.

## **The Sacred Heart of Jesus among Little Children.**

1. All good men love little children. There is something in them that recalls the presence of God, a freshness and innocence which is the mark of His creative hand before sin has marred and almost obliterated it. Our Lord more than once showed the love of His Sacred Heart for children. When a crowd of women came with their little ones begging Him to bless them and the disciples tried to push them aside, Jesus interposed: Suffer the little children to come to Me. And then He called them one by one and blessed each one, and laid upon each His Sacred hands. What graces must have flowed into the hearts of those favored children! We should pray for all the little ones whom we love, that Our Lord may in like manner bless them.

2. On another occasion when the children shouted to Him in childish glee, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! the Pharisees begged Him to silence them. But Jesus rebuked the objection almost sternly: Have you never read, Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise? Perfected praise! As if there was something in their innocent voices sweeter to Him than in any others of the mingled crowd!

3. But Jesus bestowed still higher praise on the sweet simplicity of children. He told His disciples that if they wish to enter the kingdom of heaven, they must become like little children: docile, obedient, cheerful, submissive, affectionate. Am I such?

## The Cravings of the Sacred Heart.

1. What is it that we desire one and all with a strong desire? It is to be loved. The Heart of Jesus does not differ in this respect from the hearts of ordinary men. He, too, longs for love. While on earth, the bitterest pang of His Sacred Heart was that He came to His own, and they refused Him their love. He still desires our love. He still cries out to each of us from His Cross, I thirst—I thirst for your love. Alas! how faintly I have loved in return.

2. What sort of a love does He ask for? What are its marks if it is to satisfy Him?

(1) It must be a love of obedience. If you love Me keep My commandments. It must obey each whispered inspiration, it must have no will save His.

(2) It must be a generous love, a love that rejoices in making some sacrifice for Him. A love which counts it a joy to follow in His footsteps and to suffer for Him.

(3) It must be a love of compassion. It must grieve at all that grieves Him. It must lament over the sins of others. It must seek to make reparation in some way or other for all the coldness and ingratitude of men.

3. How am I to know whether my love is one that at all satisfies the desires of the Sacred Heart? There is one certain test: when self contests my obedience with Jesus, whom do I obey? When self-love resents some injury do I indulge it? When self craves some pleasure which Jesus asks me to forego, do I listen to self or to the gentle voice of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

## The Gratitude of the Sacred Heart.

1. There never was any one so grateful for every little act of kindness as Jesus Christ while He was on earth. The woman of Samaria gave Him a drink of water, and in return He gave her the grace of eternal life. Zacheus left his business to see Him, and in return salvation came to all his house. St. Mary Magdalen poured upon His head a little box of ointment, and her gift obtained for her a name as long as the world shall last, and an everlasting reward in heaven. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the same now; still grateful for the smallest sacrifice, for each thought of affectionate remembrance.

2. To those who love Jesus He imparts a sweetness and joy which makes all the joys of earth seem paltry and contemptible. If He sends trials to those who love Him, it is only that He may have an excuse for giving them a greater reward hereafter, and even with the trials He mixes so much peace and lightness of heart that the saints pray for more trials and more sufferings.

3. But what is the gratitude of the Sacred Heart in heaven? Words cannot express it, our hearts cannot imagine it. We shall enter into the joy of Our Lord, that is, He will share with us His own unspeakable happiness. Nay, He Himself will come forth and serve His elect, to prove His exceeding gratitude to every faithful servant. O Jesus, may I be one of those thus honored! May I earn Thy Divine gratitude by my love and my obedience!



## The Disappointments of the Sacred Heart.

1. We often see a morning that opens bright and fair, clouded over before midday, and the afternoon dark and gloomy, ending in storm and desolation. So, too, there is many a life that opens with the happiest promise; a natural attraction to piety, great graces, good influences, an amicable character give hopes that he to whom these privileges are given will turn out an eminent servant of God, and love with an ever-increasing devotion the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. Yet how often the brilliant promise comes to nothing, or next to nothing. The soul which might have risen to a high degree of sanctity and enjoying continual peace and joy, is still battling with passion, anger, sloth, impatience, self-indulgence, vanity, distastes for the things of God, jealousy and ill-feeling, uncharitableness in thought and word. How is it that so little progress has been made? How is it that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been disappointed of His desire for a complete possession of the heart that He loved?

3. Alas! it is the old story. Unfaithfulness to grace in little things. He spoke plainly enough, asking for some little sacrifice, and was refused. He asked again and another refusal. At length He ceased to ask, or the unfaithful soul ceased to hear His voice. What a sad disappointment for Him! What an irreparable loss for the soul that was thus ungrateful to the invitations of her Divine Spouse! Is not this my case?

## The Sorrows of the Sacred Heart.

1. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is nothing else than a history of continual sorrow. He is termed in Holy Scripture "the Man of sorrows." Sorrowful He came into the world: in sorrow He grew up to manhood. In sorrow He gazed into the hearts of men, and saw there what He hated most. In sorrow He witnessed their refusal to listen to His divine call. In sorrow—bitter sorrow—He watched the falling away of one of the chosen twelve. In sorrow He heard of the denial of St. Peter. In sorrow He was betrayed, mocked, scourged, crucified. Was there ever sorrow like His?

2. What caused Him the greatest sorrow of all? The ingratitude of man. There is nothing that wounds so deeply as love rejected; and this is what Jesus felt every moment of His life. There was never love such as His, and therefore never such sorrow as when it was rejected. O my Jesus! I, too, have returned Thee unkindness, coldness, neglect. Forgive me the sorrow I have caused Thee, and make me love Thee more and more.

3. Was it only here and there that the Sacred Heart of Jesus met with this cause for sorrow? Alas! it was an universal sorrow, not a single child of Adam but added to this sorrow. Even the greatest saints did not return love for love as they ought; all caused Christ to sorrow. All save one; the peerless one, the immaculate, the ever faithful Mother of God. O Mary, pray for me, that I may never again cause sorrow to the Sacred Heart.

## **The Sacred Heart of Jesus among His Enemies.**

1. There is nothing more painful to the tender heart of one who loves his fellows than to be surrounded with those who look coldly on him, misunderstand him, misinterpret his words, misconstrue his actions. Such a life is in itself a perpetual martyrdom. Such was the life of Jesus. What continual pain and anguish and desolation He must have endured from His youth up, from the hostility of His townsfolk, His own relations, the scribes and Pharisees, the ancients and the rulers.

2. Yet how gentle He is to all, how forbearing, how sweet and patient and winning in His demeanor. They must indeed have been hard and wicked not to have yielded to the fascination of His Divine attractiveness. Yet so it was: they hated Him just because of His meekness, His charity, His holiness. So it is now. The more clearly the beauty of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, shows forth, the more men seem to hate her.

3. The Sacred Heart, however, with all its divine gentleness, was very stern in dealing with one class of sinners. All who were leading others wrong were the object of the fierce wrath and indignation of Jesus. This wrath was the more terrible just because of His very gentleness. How He denounces those who give scandal and those who are the occasion of sin to others! If I have ever led others into sin, I have good cause to tremble before the wrath of the Lamb!

## **The Sacred Heart at Gethsemane.**

1. During Our Lord's Sacred Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His mental desolation and distress seem to have been more intense, more crushing, than at any subsequent part of His Sacred Passion, saving only when on the Cross He cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" During the rest of the Passion He seemed almost to rejoice, but in the Garden He was beaten down, full of terror and sadness, scarce able to endure, pale and haggard and ghastly under the agony of soul that overwhelmed Him. In your desolation think of the utter desolation of the Sacred Heart, and claim its sympathy for you.

2. Why was Our Lord at this time so shorn of His strength and courage? Because then He took upon Himself in detail the sins of the world. His Sacred Heart suffered for them the same blackness of desolation and distress as if they were His own. He voluntarily deprived Himself of every source of comfort, and allowed Himself to feel the effects of sin as none could feel them save one who saw the nature of sin as God sees it.

3. One of the lessons to be learned from the awful scene of Christ's Agony is the effect of sin when given its full scope, and its power to destroy the beauty and the strength even of God made Man. If it could work such havoc in the Son of God, what must it do in us? If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

## The Sacred Heart on Calvary.

1. When a man is suffering intensely, an impulse must be very strong which turns him from his sufferings. Let us listen to the words that Our Lord kept repeating as His executioners nailed Him to the Cross, and as He hung there amid the insults and derision of the scribes and Pharisees. "Father, forgive them." This is the prevailing impulse of the Sacred Heart—to obtain forgiveness for those who ill treated and crucified Him!

2. "Father, forgive them." This prayer was not offered for those alone who were present on Calvary, but for all sinners. Instead of showing indignation at their sins, He only feels pity for them, knowing as He does the terrors of the anger of God. What a lesson for us! When we are offended our prayer too often is: Father, punish them as they deserve. What a contrast to the prayer of the Sacred Heart!

3. But He not only prays for them, but urges an argument in their behalf: "They know not what they do." If they know what it is to offend God, they would not, could not sin. How ingenious is the Sacred Heart in finding an excuse for His murderers; for all who sin deliberately. Do I make excuses for those who treat me badly? Do I not too often imagine and invent a motive of malice which does not really exist? What a contrast between Jesus and myself. What need I have to pray: Jesus meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart.

## The Confidences of the Sacred Heart.

1. Our Lord for nearly seventeen hundred years endured in silence all the ingratitude of men. Some faithful hearts had been devoted to Him, but from the generality He had received neglect, coldness, indifference, sometimes outrage, insult, sacrilege. He had witnessed the revolt of thousands and tens of thousands from the Church's yoke. Satan had usurped His place in their hearts, and they had heaped every sort of indignity on His servants, on His Church, on Himself in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. They had denied His Presence in the Blessed Sacrament; they had cast off His yoke and persecuted His servants.

2. At length Our Lord found one heart to which He could confide the story of His disappointments, and tell the tale of His sufferings. The Blessed Margaret Mary was an unknown, obscure, a poor, feeble woman. But she was so dear to His Heart that He determined to tell her of His griefs, and entrust to her the task of obtaining for Him some comfort and relief in His sorrows. How great a privilege was hers! Would that I had something of her love!

3. Moved by the devoted love of this poor, unknown religious, Our Lord appeared to her, revealed to her the treasures of His Sacred Heart, and complained to her of the cruel treatment He had received from men. Has He not good reason to complain of the way I have treated Him, and am I not one of those who have caused Him so much grief and sorrow?

## The Sacred Heart after the Resurrection.

1. When Our Blessed Lord rose again from the dead, His apostles were at first struck with mingled fear and joy. He in His turn seeks to reassure them, condescends to eat with them, to let them touch Him, encourages in them a loving familiarity. Jesus in the love of His Sacred Heart does not like men to be afraid of Him—on the contrary, we cannot have too implicit a confidence in Him ; we cannot go too far in reverent affection for His Sacred Heart.

2. The chief point which Our Lord seems desirous to secure in His friends is that they should be at peace: at peace in themselves, and at peace with all around them. He knew that without peace no one can ever make progress, no society can prosper. This is why the peace-makers are so dear to His Sacred Heart, and why He gives them the title of being pre-eminently the children of God. Have I peace in my soul? and do I foster and promote peace around me?

3. Our Lord also seems to be grieved at any doubt or incredulity among His followers respecting the Resurrection. He cannot bear the sceptical spirit, He loves the spirit of simple faith. When we hear of some miracle in the physical or moral order, we ought to desire to believe it and to lean to the side of acceptance. The wish to believe will not make us foolishly credulous; it will rather quicken our instinctive perception of truth.

## The Sacred Heart in Heaven.

1. Now that Jesus has returned to His throne in heaven, has He forgotten His friends on earth? No, He loves them now as much as ever, nay, He loves them if it be possible better than ever. As the world grows old, and the love of many waxes cold, He entertains a greater pity and compassion and love for those who remain faithful to Him. His Sacred Heart still beats in sympathy with every one of us no less than it did for the poor widow who had lost her son, and for Peter when he denied his Master, or for the disciples in their sorrow and desolation during the three days that He lay in the grave.

2. How is Our Lord employed in heaven? When the Apostle speaks of Him as at the right hand of God, he describes His life as primarily that of an advocate for sinful man. He is always living to make intercession for us (Hebrews vii. 25). He is continually holding out to His Father His hands which bear the marks of the Sacred Wounds, and pleading for sinners. His prayer still is, Father forgive them! What a consolation for us!

3. He has another work in heaven which He Himself announced. He told His disciples, I go to prepare a place for you. I go to bestow on you the graces necessary to obtain. I go to help you to fight the battle and win the crown. My Sacred Heart will never be satisfied till you are all here with Me, rejoicing forever before the throne of God. O Jesus, my Lord and my God! grant that I may not fail of my eternal reward.



## **The Sacred Heart in the Tabernacle.**

1. Where shall we find a better proof of the love of the Sacred Heart for man than in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? He was not satisfied with proving His love for men by His Sacrifice on the Cross, but He must needs prolong that Sacrifice to all time. There is no moment in which He is not still offering Himself upon some altar to show that He loves us as much as ever.

2. Nor is this all. When He ascended into heaven, He promised that He would send the Holy Ghost the Paraclete to abide forever with His disciples. But as it were by some Divine afterthought, He seemed not to be satisfied by thus sending the Holy Spirit to take His place. He determined to remain amongst those He loved. In every Tabernacle He waits and watches for the visits of His faithful children, longing for them to come and talk to Him and tell Him their troubles and their needs, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears; and He is always ready to listen to and comfort them and to grant their prayers.

3. Yet, alas! how often is He neglected. His loving Heart longs for some one to come and hold converse with Him, but how often it looks and longs in vain for hours, or it may be for days. How have I treated Jesus in the tabernacle? Do I pay Him little visits of love when I can? and tell Him how I love Him, and wish to love Him more?

## **The Piercing of the Sacred Heart.**

1. When Our Lord had breathed forth His soul into the hands of His Eternal Father, the Sacred Heart could for a time no longer continue its work of love for men. But as if to show that even in death it loved them still, God ordained that it should be pierced by the centurion's lance, and should shed its last drops of blood for man. It was as if He whose lifeless Body hung there was not satisfied with suffering even to death, but needs must show how even in death from His Sacred Body grace and mercy poured forth for the healing of sin.

2. Out of His Heart flowed blood and water. That blood is the source of life to sinful man; with it the elect are inebriated, and all the saints before the throne of God have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Reflect on these graces conferred by the Precious Blood, and pray that you may wash in it and be clean.

3. Out of His Heart too flowed water, that living water of which He said : He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst forever. Of that water the redeemed drink in heaven. Their Lord Himself leads them to the fountains of the water of life. That water now refreshes His servants in this world's weary paths. Jesus, my Lord, give me to drink of that living water that shall make me thirst after Thee, and after nought else but Thee.

## **The Best Means of Honoring the Sacred Heart.**

1. There is one very simple way of honoring the Sacred Heart. Our Lord promises to Blessed Margaret Mary that wherever an image of it is exposed and honored, it shall bring with it all kinds of blessings. At least we can show the Sacred Heart this external mark of our loyalty, and keep before ourselves a picture which will remind us of the loving sympathy of Jesus.

2. Each day, moreover, we should say some ejaculatory prayers in honor of the Sacred Heart,<sup>1</sup> and each Friday should consecrate ourselves to it, communicating at least on the first Friday in every month. Such Communions persevered in for nine continuous months have attached to them the promise of final perseverance for all who offer them in honor of the Sacred Heart.

3. But as the best praise is imitation, we cannot honor the Sacred Heart better than by seeking to imitate its meekness, patience, sympathy. These are such rare gifts. How often have I prayed: Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thy Heart! Yet how little do my thoughts and actions correspond to the prayer that I offer. Henceforth I will determine to be kinder to others in honor of the Sacred Heart that has ever been so kind to me!

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<sup>1</sup> A few instances of such prayers will be found on page 35.

## **Ejaculations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**

1. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore that I may ever love Thee more and more.

2. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

3. Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love!

4. Heart of Jesus, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.

5. O how good and pleasant it is to dwell in this Heart! Who is there who does not love a heart so wounded? Who can refuse a return of love to a heart so loving?

6. Heart of Jesus, most meek, most humble, most patient! School my heart in meekness, patience, and humility.

7. Heart of Jesus, burning with love for me, inflame my heart with love of Thee.

8. Heart of Jesus, have compassion upon me!



**The Precious Blood.**  
SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR JULY.



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## 1st Day.—The Name of the Precious Blood of Jesus.

1. Why is the blood of Jesus called the *Precious Blood*? Because it was the blood of God Himself veiled under the form of man, and therefore every drop of it as it flowed through His sacred veins deserved our supreme homage, as being united to His divinity. Hence we can adore the Precious Blood as we adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and all else that belongs to the sacred humanity, with the supreme homage that belongs to God alone.

2. We also term it the Precious Blood inasmuch as it was the blood of One Who was not only full of grace, but was Himself the Source of all grace, so that the grace that dwelt with Him was infinite, and the grace that manifested itself through the veil of flesh had no bounds or limits, save those that the mere fact of His human nature carried with it. If, therefore, the blood of the saints is counted as most precious, if we treasure up a piece of cloth stained with their blood, how much more is the blood of the King of saints precious beyond all price!

3. The Precious Blood is also precious on account of its effects. One drop of it was sufficient not only to cleanse the world from sin, but to earn all possible graces for all the millions who have ever lived on earth. How infinite then must be its preciousness! What has it not done for man! What has it not done for me! It has washed me clean and made me pure, in spite of all my sins. O Jesus! give me an ever-increasing devotion to the Precious Blood!

## 2d Day.—The Eternity of the Precious Blood.

1. St. Peter tells us (1 St. Pet. i. 20) that the Precious Blood of Christ was "foreknown before the foundation of the world." From all eternity God had decreed that the Precious Blood of the Word made Man should be shed for us. Even before man had sinned, God had provided a remedy, and had determined that if man should rebel against the sovereignty of God, He would not cast the rebel off, but would redeem him from sin, even at such a price as this! How can we sufficiently admire the love and mercy of God, thus counteracting the effect of sin even before it was committed?

2. God's foreknowledge of what was to happen did not effect the perfect freedom of the human will, any more than the presence of a spectator affects the freedom of those whose actions he watches. God determined that the Precious Blood should be shed because He foreknew that man would sin, and He foreknew that man would sin because in His omniscience He foresaw that man acting freely would use his free-will to disobey. Make an act of faith in man's freedom and God's foreknowledge.

3. When God looks forward to my life, what does He foresee? This depends on myself and on my voluntary choice of good or of evil. What return does He look forward to from me for the inestimable gift of the Precious Blood? Am I going to grieve and wound Him Who from all eternity decreed that His Precious Blood should be shed to win for me the kingdom of heaven?

### **3d Day.—The Anticipation of the Precious Blood.**

1. When the promise of the Redeemer to come was made to our first parents in the Garden of Eden after their fall, the shadow of the Precious Blood fell upon the world and reconciled it with God. The curse that had been incurred had lost its fatal power to destroy. The anger of God was appeased and He looked upon the earth through the medium of the Blood of His only-begotten Son, that was to be shed for sin, and for its sake offered forgiveness and mercy to the sinners who repented of their sin. So may He extend to me the forgiveness and mercy that I need far more than did Adam and Eve, for I have sinned far more deeply and more often than they.

2. As the ages rolled on, the same shadow, sheltering men from God's fierce anger, still rested on the earth. In its sweet shade rested Abraham and all the patriarchs, Samuel and all the prophets; through its influence sinners found mercy and saints obtained graces innumerable. If it did so much for the heathen world, what must it not do for Christians and Catholics! Grant, O Lord, that now and ever I may sit under His shadow Whom I have desired!

3. All through the four thousand years before Christ came, the tradition of the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins was almost universal. The Jewish sacrifices were expressly ordained to keep up the memory of it. In heathen countries the blood of victims was almost everywhere offered. God never leaves Himself without a witness even among those who have departed far from Him. Admire His goodness in so doing.

#### **4th Day.—Types of the Precious Blood .**

##### **(1) The Blood of Abel.**

1. Abel was slain by his cruel brother Cain because he offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain, and his brother, filled with rage at the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, deliberately shed his innocent blood. So the Jews, filled with rage at the exceeding holiness of Jesus' life, and at the sweet attractiveness of His words, and the divine beauty of His works of mercy, shed His Precious Blood. So the wicked are ever enraged against the good and grudge them their favor with God.

2. The blood of Abel cried out to God for vengeance on his murderer. The blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, cries out to God for mercy on those who have outraged Him and put Him to death. Even while Jesus hung on the cross, He prayed His Father to forgive them, and ever since, as long as the world shall last, His blood still cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" O Jesus, may Thy blood thus cry out for me!

3. Yet, at the same time, it cries for vengeance on those who deliberately and wilfully reject Him. Long, indeed, He bears with them, long and patiently. Yet if in the end they spurn His Precious Blood, His very mercy will bring upon them a vengeance in proportion to His offer of love. O Jesus! may I never reject Thee or refuse Thy love and mercy!

## 5th Day.—Types of the Precious Blood:

### (2) The Blood of the Paschal Lamb.

1. On the night when God delivered His people from Egypt a lamb was slain that was a type of the Lamb of God. It was to be a lamb without blemish, no bone of it was to be broken, it was to be wholly consumed by those in whose dwelling it was slain, and its blood was to be shed to the last drop. Apply these conditions of the paschal lamb to the Lamb of God, and see how perfectly they were fulfilled in the sacrifice of the cross.

2. The blood of the paschal lamb was to be sprinkled on the door-posts of the Israelites; and thereby they were to be rendered safe from the judgment that fell upon the Egyptians. So the Precious Blood sprinkled upon our hearts saves us from the punishment we have justly deserved. It appeases the anger of God and marks us as belonging to Him, and travellers to the heavenly Jerusalem longing to be freed from the bondage of earthly things.

3. How is the Precious Blood sprinkled on our souls? In all the sacraments of the Church, in every act of contrition, in every deed of supernatural charity, in every prayer offered humbly and with confidence, it falls upon us, and renders us safe from the avenging angel, and secures us from the anger of God that our sins have justly merited. *Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo et mundabor*—"Sprinkle me, O Lord, and I shall be rendered clean in Thy sight."

## 6th Day.—Types of the Precious Blood :

### (3) The Peace-Offering.

1. The peace-offering was one of the chief sacrifices of the Old Law. It was an offering of gratitude for blessings received, or of petition for blessings desired. So Jesus offered Himself upon the cross, not only to obtain for us the blessings of eternal life, but also to render thanks to God for His mercy to man and make to Him the only possible return worthy of His divine majesty.

2. The blood of the heifer sacrificed was shed as a necessary part of the sacrifice. "The priests the sons of Aaron shall offer the blood thereof, pouring it round about the altar" (Lev. i. 5). There is no mark of our gratitude to God like willingness to suffer for Him. The blood is, as it were, the life, and the shedding of it corresponds in the body to the sacrifice of our will in the soul; which is the noblest sacrifice that man can make to God. Do I sacrifice my will to God's, or is self-will still strong within me?

3. The blood was shed, moreover, as a means of obtaining fresh favors. Those who are anxious to gain great things from God must make some sacrifice for His sake, and those who are most powerful with Him are those who give up their will to His. Christ in His sacred humanity is all-powerful with God, because in the head of the book it is written of Him that He should fulfil the will of God and was content to do it. Do I deserve such influence with Him?

## 7th Day.—Types of the Precious Blood:

### (4) The Offerings for Sins of Ignorance.

1. In the Book of Leviticus (iv.) an elaborate ritual is prescribed in expiation of sins committed through ignorance. A calf is to be offered, and the ancients of the people are to lay their hands upon its head, and the priest is to carry some of its blood into the tabernacle of the testimony, and to sprinkle it seven times before the veil and to pour forth the blood at the foot of the altar. All this is in expiation for sins committed by those who at the time knew not that they were sins. What a proof of God's hatred of sin, even though he who did the act was not at the time aware that it was a sin!

2. Yet such ignorance is rarely altogether without some fault. Sometimes there was at least some faint suspicion that the deed done was displeasing to God, sometimes the ignorance was itself the result of sin blinding the soul and dulling the perceptions, sometimes it was the consequence of obstinacy and self-will. I may have committed many sins through ignorance; were they altogether without fault?

3. Those sins had to be atoned for with blood, and that blood was a type of the blood of Jesus. He, therefore, shed His Precious Blood for my sins of ignorance as well as sins of malice, and whatever fault was in them added to His sacred sufferings. I must then compassionate with Him in all that He suffered for the countless sins that men have committed against God through ignorance, and especially for my own.



**8th Day.—Types of the Precious Blood :**  
**(5) The Holocaust.**

1. The holocaust, or whole burnt offering, could be an ox, or sheep, or pigeon, or turtle-dove, according to the abilities of him who offered it. Its blood was to be shed, and the whole body was afterwards to be burnt upon the altar. So Christ offered Himself a holocaust to God; there was no part of His human nature that was not sacrificed for the sins of men. All the faculties of His soul, every thought and wish and inclination, every nerve and fibre in His body, all were offered to God and consecrated to Him. Try and realize the extent of this sacrifice.

2. In this offering Christ left us an example. If we are really to tread in His footsteps, a partial offering is not enough. As long as we keep anything for ourselves and deny it to God, there is rapine in our holocaust; that is, we keep back part of what we profess to sacrifice entirely to God; and such an offering cannot be acceptable. Is there anything which I consciously still keep back from God?

3. First of all, the blood of the holocaust was to be shed, and the blood, as we read in Holy Scripture, signifies the life. We must therefore dedicate our lives to God before we can belong wholly to Him. Hence the virtue of religious vows. If we are not called to these, at least we are called to make the service of God the end and aim of our daily life. Is this the character of my life?

## 9th Day.—The Precious Blood in its Earthly Origin.

1. A child in its mother's womb lives with the physical life of its mother. It is nourished by its mother, and her blood circulates in its veins. The Precious Blood of Jesus flowing through His veins was derived from Mary. She furnished from her immaculate body the Precious Blood that Jesus shed for us. How close must have been the union of Jesus and Mary! Can we wonder at her surpassing holiness when she not only carried her God within her womb, but furnished the very body with which His humanity clothed itself?

2. We also find in this thought a fresh proof of Mary's unblemished purity. It is repugnant to our reverence for the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to imagine Him dwelling in a womb that had ever been defiled with sin, and much more to suppose that the Precious Blood which flowed in His veins and was the price of our redemption did not come from a source as pure as God could make it. Make an act of faith in the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and thank God for that privilege conferred on her.

3. We must also remember that Jesus' blood was wholly Mary's. It was not as in the case of other children who have an earthly father. The body of Jesus was formed in Mary's womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and naturally Jesus was altogether hers. In heaven, the body that Jesus wears is still the body derived from Mary, and their union is now closer than ever. In holy Communion Jesus is altogether ours. Do we conform ourselves to Him as Mary did?

## 10th Day.—The Precious Blood on Calvary.

1. In old pictures and engravings of the crucifixion we often see angels holding a chalice to catch the drops of the Precious Blood as they fall from the sacred wounds in the hands and feet of Jesus. We are also told that the angels collected all the blood that Our Lord had shed during His Passion, that not a drop might be lost. How they must have counted each drop as a treasure of infinite value! What were all the treasures of earth compared with these drops, instinct with the Godhead of Jesus! Pray that you may scorn all earthly things in comparison with the Precious Blood of Jesus.

2. The angels not only treasure up the Precious Blood, but they pay to each drop their supreme homage. So we kneel and adore the Precious Blood in the chalice upon the altar. In each drop Christ is present whole and undivided. Make an act of faith in this wondrous miracle, and pray that you may adore with a reverent homage like that of the angels present at the crucifixion.

3. As the three hours advance, the body of Jesus is more and more drained of the Precious Blood. Hence follows a thirst so agonizing that it forced from the lips of Jesus the cry, "I thirst!" When our lips are parched and dry in sickness or in the agony of death, may we remember Thee, O Lord, and Thy sacred thirst endured for us, and may we offer up our sufferings in union with Thy unspeakable and agonizing thirst upon the cross!

## **11th Day.—The Universality of the Precious Blood.**

1. It is of faith that Christ died, not only for the elect, but for all. There was no single individual member of the whole race of men who did not enjoy the privilege of being redeemed by Christ, not the most degraded of the heathen, not the most ignorant or the most hardened in sin. The Precious Blood was sprinkled on all, and if they did not avail themselves of its benefits it was their own fault. None will incur the eternal misery of hell who has not deliberately rejected the forgiveness that the Precious Blood won for us.

2. What about the innocent child who dies without Baptism? For it, too, the Precious Blood was shed; and if it does not attain to eternal happiness in heaven, this is owing to the wilful sin of man, and not to any lack of efficacy in the Precious Blood. It will at least enjoy great natural happiness through all eternity. He who shed His Precious Blood for all is not unmindful of those who through no fault of their own fail of attaining the joy of the beatific vision.

3. Does the Precious Blood do anything for sinners who have rejected it? Yes, for though their rejection of it excludes them from all right to share in the blessings it won for man, and has deserved for them eternal punishment, yet their punishment, terrible as it will be, will nevertheless be in some way short of what they deserved, and this through the merits of the Precious Blood. Thank God for His infinite mercy, and pray that you may never forfeit any of the graces won for you.

## **12th Day.—The Victories of the Precious Blood.**

1. The Precious Blood has conquered sin and Satan. It was the shedding of it on the cross which gave the death-blow to the kingdom of the devil. It was when the Son of God had by the loss of His Sacred Blood been reduced to the extremity of weakness and of misery, and brought down to the very gates of death, that he triumphed over the tyrant that had enslaved the world, and compelled all the rebel angels to bow the knee before His sacred humanity. Rejoice with your victorious King, and pray that you may deserve to share His triumph.

2. The Precious Blood has also conquered sinners by thousands, who, if it had not been shed, would have remained hardened sinners unto the end. Who can withstand its silent appeal, as it trickles down from His head, His hands, His feet? Who can refuse to listen to its silent pleadings? Who can turn away from Him Who has thus loved us even unto death? O my Jesus, may I never turn away from Thy voice calling me from Thy throne upon the cross to love Thee and obey Thy voice!

3. The Precious Blood has also conquered and averted the anger of God, Whose decree of just retribution would but for it have fallen upon sinners. Can the Father resist the pleadings of His co-equal Son when He holds out His hands, still marked with the scars of His sacred wounds, and asks for mercy and forgiveness for the sinner? May Thy wounds, O Jesus, plead for me now and at the hour of death!

## 13th Day.—The Conquests of the Precious Blood.

1. Victory without conquest is but of little avail to one who invades the territory of the foe. Our Lord came not only to subdue His enemies, but to obtain for Himself a kingdom. By the shedding of the Precious Blood the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of Our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. The blood of Jesus sinking into the ground gave to this earth a new life. The curse had departed, the new era had begun which shall culminate in the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth justice. Pray that the King may soon come to take possession of this kingdom.

2. The shedding of the Precious Blood also won for Christ our King not only a new territory, but a multitude of new subjects. If the material world was sanctified by the Precious Blood, how much more those who dwelt upon it! What must be the joy of Jesus to look down on whole countries faithful to Him amidst trials and persecutions! Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Catholic Austria, France, Italy, covered with multitudes subdued and held in joyful captivity by the Precious Blood. Rejoice in the wide spread of the Faith, and pray that it may spread more and more.

3. Above all, the Precious Blood has subdued to the yoke of Christ priests innumerable, monks, nuns, saints in the world and in religion, all rejoicing to be the very bond-slaves of the Precious Blood. Their chief calls himself the Servant of the Servants of God. Pray that you may rejoice to be a willing slave of Jesus Christ.

## 14th Day.—Sanctification by the Precious Blood.

1. The Precious Blood does not only wash away the sins of men and restore them to friendship with God. This is but the commencement of its work of love and mercy. It has in it unlimited power to carry them on to the heights of sanctity, to engender in them every virtue, to implant in the soul all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. So we read in the Apocalypse that the Lamb of God has not only washed us from our sins in His own blood, but also made us to be kings and priests of God. So through the Precious Blood there is bestowed on me not only cleanness from my past sins, but graces to make me beautiful in the sight of God.

2. How does the Precious Blood win these graces for us? It appeals to the love of God, and reminds Him that, as He has given us the surpassing gift of His own Son to be sacrificed for us, He must with Him also freely give us *all things*. In that one gift all else is contained, and we have a sort of claim to whatever we want from the hands of God.

3. The Precious Blood of Christ also obtains our sanctification by the merits that it won for us. Each drop that was shed was enough, and more than enough, to purchase graces without limit or end. All the actions of Our Lord had an infinite value by reason of His infinite dignity. How much more the shedding of that Blood which in itself calls for the highest adoration!

## 15th Day.—The Waste of the Precious Blood.

1. It seems a strange thing to say that the Precious Blood of Jesus was wasted, and in one sense it is true that every drop fulfilled the design for which it was shed in the honor it gave to God and the immeasurable reward that it won for the sacred humanity of the Son of God. But as regards men, for whom it was shed, it was in great measure wasted, because they in their folly and guilt refused the boon that was offered them. Alas! what madness to spurn such a treasure, every drop of which was worth a million worlds!

2. How do men waste the Precious Blood? Whenever they reject any grace that it has won for them, whether it be a grace to avoid sin, or a grace that is intended to carry them on to a higher level of virtue, their rejection renders it, as far as they are concerned, inefficacious. It has been offered in vain, on account of their non-acceptance of the grace offered them.

3. Their rejection of it does not simply leave them where they were, but puts them in a worse position than before it was received. They are less ready to receive further graces. They have disqualified themselves for at least a portion of the rich store of grace that God had prepared for them. The Precious Blood has not only been shed in vain for them, but through their perversity has been for their disadvantage, and not for their benefit, in respect of the grace they have rejected and other graces which would have followed from it. Pray, then, that you may never wilfully reject any grace, lest your birthright, like Esau's, should prove a curse rather than a blessing.



## 16th Day.—The Trampling on the Precious Blood.

1. There are some who not only waste the Precious Blood, but actually trample it under their feet. These are they who, being washed from all their sins in the most Precious Blood of Jesus, deliberately turn back again to the sins they have abandoned, and set at naught His proffered love and friendship, and become far worse at the end than they were at the beginning. My Jesus! may I never be guilty of such base ingratitude!

2. But there are others still worse, who, after having been enrolled in the army of Jesus Christ, desert His standard and profess themselves unable to accept the teaching of the Church. Through pride or vice or covetousness they lose all their love of their holy faith and appreciation of its truth. These do indeed trample on the Precious Blood, and put Christ Our Lord to shame. Yet at any time, without God's grace, I might be guilty of a like abandonment of my faith. O my God, make me always faithful to Thee!

3. There is a still lower depth. Some not only lose their faith, but become its enemies and traducers. They esteem the blood with which they are sanctified an unclean thing, and offer an affront to the Spirit of grace. They assail the Church, its ministers, its sacraments, its doctrines, with lying lips and open insult. How can any ever fall so low as this? Yet among them all will be found some who were once more pleasing to God than I. May I take warning from them and humble myself, and cherish as an inestimable treasure the grace won for me by the Precious Blood!

## 17th Day.—The Precious Blood quenching the Flames of Hell.

1. Mortal sin can only have two endings : to be blotted out by the Precious Blood, or incur the eternal punishment of hell. By the first it is totally extinguished ; by the second it is retained as a testimony to the justice of God and to His infinite holiness, which cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Pray for a great horror of mortal sin, which involves such consequences : everlasting misery for the unrepentant sinner, and the pouring forth of the Precious Blood as the only remedy even for those who do penance for their sins.

2. The guilt of mortal sin is entirely abolished by the blood of Christ, and also the eternal punishment. But the temporal punishment only so far as the sinner has a sufficient contrition for his sin and does all in his power to atone for it. For many who die in the love and fear of God there will remain a heavy debt still to be paid.

3. How are we to apply to our souls the blood of Christ so that we may be free from temporal punishment as well as from guilt ? (1) We must offer up our sufferings in union with those of the Son of God, and bear them with meekness and resignation for His sake. (2) We must make frequent acts of the love of God and seek to bear Him in continual remembrance. (3) We must perform some determinate penances for determinate sins, both for sins in the past, and tendencies to sin in the present. (4) We must give alms if we can. (5) We must try and extinguish our own sins by saving others from sin. To prevent one mortal sin is to extinguish a virtual hell.

## 18th Day.—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Sacrifice.

1. Why did the Eternal Father choose for His co-equal Son that He should close His sojourn on earth by the cruel agony and unspeakable degradation of shedding for man the last drop of the Precious Blood? Would it not have sufficed to redeem us from sin if He had appeared on earth for one instant clad in human form? Yes; but then man would never have learnt the lesson of sacrifice. He would not have been moved to regard suffering as a necessary part of the ideal life. We thank Thee, O Lord, for this Thy commiseration for our blindness and our ignorance!

2. The lesson of sacrifice for the sake of others is one that Our Lord's life teaches us throughout. Nothing for Himself; no concession to His human nature for its own sake. No avoiding of pain or reproach on account of the suffering it entailed, but rather a joyful acceptance of all that might be to man a source of grace and a motive of virtue. May I rejoice, O Lord, to have the privilege of following Thee step by step along Thy path of suffering!

3. This road of suffering is also one that leads us to solid happiness in this world and eternal joy in the next. It is for our own interest to sacrifice ourselves. Who are so happy as they who shed their blood for Christ? For them no purgatory whatever through their past life, but an immediate entrance into the celestial paradise. Such a sacrifice as this may not be asked of me; but do I make those that I know would be pleasing to Him Who sacrificed Himself wholly for me?

## 19th Day.—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Patience.

1. If we watch the Son of God during those scenes in His sacred passion in which He shed His blood for us, we notice in one and all His exceeding and incomparable patience. During the agony in the garden it was the sight of the brutal ingratitude of man that caused the sweat of blood to flow from His sacred limbs. How could He endure to suffer for such wretches? Yet meekly and patiently He endured their sacrileges, blasphemies, impurities, wanton hatred of God, which rose up before Him as He knelt there in Gethsemani.

2. At the pillar, again, what divine patience! Not a look of anger, not a word of reproach. There He stands, the picture of uncomplaining endurance. What a lesson for me! How ready I am to complain, even when I receive some fancied slight or some trifling injury! How different am I from the Son of God! What a contrast is my conduct to His! O Jesus! teach me to endure without complaint my sufferings, which are small indeed when compared with Thine!

3. See Him once more upon the cross! Listen to the gibes and sneers cast at Him by the priests, their taunts of His inability to save Himself, Messiah though He was. How all this must have aggravated His physical agony! Yet His constant prayer was, Father, forgive them! O Jesus, grant me more of the patience and meekness Thou didst show while Thy Precious Blood was ebbing forth on the altar of the cross!

## 20th Day.—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Charity.

1. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood" (Apoc. i. 5). St. John, the apostle of love, mentions this as the primary mark of the love of Jesus for us. He proved His love by saving those He loved from that which would have separated them forever from Him: and this although the loss was theirs, not His, and though it was one that they richly deserved to incur. Here is a model for us, when others wrong us and return ill-will for our love.

2. This reconciliation He effected at the cost of His own blood. We read sometimes of a child who sheds his blood for father or mother, or a husband who sheds his blood for his beloved spouse. We admire exceedingly such noble and generous self-devotion. But who ever heard of one who shed his blood in order to reconcile to himself, and restore peace and happiness to, enemies who had wilfully and deliberately insulted him? Love so wonderful as this was possible only to the Son of God.

3. Yet if we are really to learn of Him to follow in His footsteps, we must imitate Him in this love for enemies. He Himself commands it: "Love your enemies!" "If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have?" The precept seems impossible, and becomes possible only when we contemplate Him Who shed the last drop of His blood for those who hated Him. Looking at Thee, O Lord, I not only will forgive those who have offended me, but I will seek to do them good, that I may have the happiness of doing to them as Thou hast done to me!

## **21st Day.—The First Shedding of the Precious Blood.**

1. It was but a few days after Our Lord's Birth that his Precious Blood first flowed for the sins of men. It was on the occasion of His circumcision, the rite which is generally believed to have been the condition of the cleansing away of original sin under the Jewish covenant. O Jesus, at least Thine infancy might have passed before the work of expiation began! No; from His earliest days Christ began His work of redemption. In His yearning love He longed for suffering on behalf of those He loved, and would brook no delay.

2. The Precious Blood flowing in those earliest days teaches us another lesson. It shows how sin never fails to bring suffering with it. If it did so in the case of God made Man, and that throughout His life so that He was never exempt from suffering, how much more is it reasonable that it should do so in the case of sinful man! If it did such things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? How then can I with all my sins expect to escape suffering?

3. Yet this first blood-shedding, this early suffering, was the occasion of the Name of Jesus being given to the Child Who endured it. He was our Saviour in, and because of, His suffering—in, and because of, the shedding of His Precious Blood. Hence to suffer for Him, to be willing to shed our blood for Him, is the condition of sharing in His glorious work as Saviour of the world. Without suffering, without shedding of blood is no remission.

## 22d Day.—The Second Shedding of the Precious Blood.

1. It is said that those who have suffered an extremity of anguish have sometimes been bathed in a perspiration which was tinged with blood. In the Garden of Gethsemani, Jesus was bathed in a sweat of blood which poured down to the ground. Ah, what must have been the intensity of His agony! None ever knew such sorrow as His. None ever was so crushed by the weight of intolerable misery. How could this happen to the Divine Son of God? To me it might have happened, and happened justly for my sins, but to Him it seems impossible, unjust, cruel.

2. It happened to Jesus because on Him sin was allowed to wreak all its malice, to do all the havoc of which its immeasurable intensity of evil is possible, as far as was compatible with His sinlessness and His divine perfections. In some respects the very perfection of His nature caused Him to suffer more, as none was so sensitive to pain and disappointment as He, and His divinity, far from being used by Him to relieve His sufferings, was only employed to enable His sacred humanity to suffer more than it could have borne unaided.

3. Was this unjust? No, for He took it upon Himself and bore it willingly. Was it cruel? No, for His sacred humanity was to have a reward altogether exceeding such sufferings as His. It was to enjoy the glory of the highest heaven to all eternity in return for its brief agony on earth. For the joy that was set before Him He gladly endured it all, the joy of saving us from sin and death.

### **23d Day.—The Third Shedding of the Precious Blood.**

1. When Pilate found that he could not persuade the Jews to consent to the release of Jesus, he ordered Him to be scourged, hoping that they might be satisfied with something short of His death, and that their rage might be softened at the sight of a punishment so cruel. The scourging was for this reason severe beyond what was usual, as the Pharisees are said to have bribed the executioners and plied them with drink to induce them to still greater barbarity. See how all seemed to unite to add to the tortures inflicted on the Son of God.

2. Watch the scene. The Son of God with His hands tied to a short pillar, on either side of Him an executioner with a scourge of many lashes, some tipped with barbed spikes of iron, lashing Him with brutal ferocity. His sacred body first covered with bruises and weals, and then the flesh cut open and the Precious Blood first trickling and then flowing down from the open wounds. Still they go on striking the wounds and sores and bleeding flesh with unrelenting violence, the barbs tearing off morsels of flesh until the ground is covered not only with a pool of blood, but also with morsels of His sacred flesh. O Jesus, what didst Thou not suffer for me!

3. Hear Him moaning gently in His agony, and amidst the moans praying to the Eternal Father to accept each blow in expiation for the sins of men, and especially for the sinful indulgence of the flesh. O Jesus, may the thought of Thy scourging keep me from ever yielding to temptation, and may I mortify my body for love of Thee!



## 24th Day.—The Fourth Shedding of the Precious Blood.

1. After the scourging the soldiers devised a fresh torture for the Son of God. They wove of the spiny branches of the thorn a sort of helmet or crown of thorns, and put it on His head, pressing it down with their spears. The long sharp thorns pierce through the flesh, and the Precious Blood trickles down over His forehead and fills His eyes, blinding Him, and causing Him fresh pain and misery.

2. This crowning of thorns was to atone for our proud thoughts, impure thoughts, uncharitable thoughts; the trickling blood covering His sacred face, for our wretched vanity and desire to beautify ourselves in the sight of men; the blinding of His eyes, for our immodest looks, careless looks, looks of curiosity and pride. O my Lord, how varied were the sufferings Thou hadst to undergo for my manifold sins!

3. Each form of suffering endured by the Son of God will have its own appropriate reward for His sacred humanity. As for each stripe a fresh ray of glory, for each insult a new song of praise from angels and saints, so the crown He will wear in heaven will be glorious in proportion to the suffering and the ignominy of the crown of thorns. All that we endure for Him will have a corresponding and appropriate reward in heaven.

## 25th Day.—The Fifth Shedding of the Precious Blood.

1. On the summit of Calvary, stretched upon the rough cross, with His arms extended along the cross-pieces which are to form the horizontal part of it, lies the Son of God, already wounded, covered with blood, exhausted by suffering and by His repeated falls upon the way. Surely the executioners will be satisfied with the ordinary method of tying His arms to the cross, and leaving Him thus to die. No; for the innocent, spotless Lamb of God new tortures are in store. Huge nails are placed in the centre of His hands, and with cruel strokes of a heavy mallet driven through His delicate, sensitive palms. The blows are struck; the Precious Blood gushes forth, and Jesus groans under the exquisite pain which thrills through every nerve.

2. O Jesus! how can we bear to see Thee thus wounded! Those hands which were ever stretched forth to do good to all, to heal sorrows, and cure diseases! They never did aught but good; how then can cruel men be so ungrateful, so barbarous, so impious as to requite Thee thus? Oh, may I learn to sorrow with Thy anguish, and, like Thy most holy Mother, to join my compassion to Thy passion!

3. Yet sad and strange to say, my actions correspond but ill to the expressions of my sorrow. It is for the sins committed by my stretched-out hands that Thou art suffering; for myselfishness, unkindness, immodesty, anger, covetousness. How shall I compensate Thee for my share in this cruelty? Oh, help me to do so, and show me how I can do so!

## 26th Day.—The Sixth Shedding of the Precious Blood.

1. Not the hands alone, that did for man those works of love, but also the feet, that went about doing good, were pierced by the cruel nails. It seems as if men were bent on requiting the very limbs that were employed for the good of man with evil in return. They not only hated Him without a cause, but they hated Him for His love to them. Such is man when he is in Satan's power. Such have I too often been; so ungrateful to God, rebelling against the means which He employed to heal my soul and deliver me from sin.

2. What must have been the unutterable agony of those three hours during which the sacred body of Our Lord was dragging with all its weight on the wounds in His hands and feet! Who can describe it? The agony that racked each nerve so that there was no sound part in His body; the utter exhaustion, and, worst of all, the agonizing thirst that was the effect of the continual streams which drained His sacred body of the Precious Blood. Who can imagine it? "Behold and see, all who pass by the way, whether there is any sorrow like to My sorrow."

3. Yet these wounds, inflicted by man's malignity, are now employed by Jesus as arguments pleading for mercy for sinners at His Father's hands. Oh, Jesus, when shall I forgive, as Thou didst forgive me? When shall I learn that it is a privilege and a glory to return good for evil, and so to resemble Thee?

## 27th Day.—The Seventh Shedding of the Precious Blood.

1. Even when the work of redemption was consummated, and Jesus had breathed forth His soul into His Father's hands, He shed once more His Precious Blood for man. It was to mark the completeness of His sacrifice that He thus poured forth, as it were, the last drop that still lingered in His Sacred Heart. It was a sign that He kept nothing in reserve. He proved His inexhaustible love to man by this last act by which He bequeathed to man the last trace of life that still remained. Oh, undying, unwavering love of Jesus, that loved us with an extremity of love unto the very end!

2. The water and the blood that issued from Our Lord's side were the symbols of the two chief sacraments: the water of holy Baptism, and the blood of the Blessed Eucharist. Thus it was that Christ is said, by this piercing of His side, to have laid the foundations of the Church; and as Eve, the spouse of Adam, was formed from the side of Adam, so the Church, the sacred Spouse of Christ, was formed from His side when the spear of the centurion pierced it. Pray for an intense love of holy Church, on account of the love that Christ bears to His own true spouse.

3. The centurion little knew the meaning and import of his act when he pierced the side of Jesus. He had some affection of the eyes, and the blood sprinkled upon him cured his sight in a moment. At the same time grace touched his heart, and he was converted. Oh, wondrous power of the sacred blood of Christ!

## 28th Day.—The Precious Blood in Baptism.

1. In Baptism the Precious Blood washes away from the soul of the new-born child, or of the adult who approaches the sacrament in good dispositions, the stain of original sin. This privilege extends to all, whether within the Church or outside of it, who are validly baptized with water, and the words prescribed and the intention on the part of him who administers it to do that which the Catholic Church does in the baptism of her children. Thus through the power of the Precious Blood hundreds and thousands of little children are enabled to see the face of God forever in heaven.

2. It is not merely the absence of what is hateful to God that is the result of Baptism. The soul of the baptized child receives a share of all the perfections and graces won for us by the Precious Blood. It is not merely cleansed, but sanctified. It is not colorless like water, but red with the charity of which the Precious Blood is the sign and symbol. It is filled with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are poured into it. It is beautiful exceedingly in God's sight, for it has a supernatural likeness to Him.

3. This beauty remains in the soul of all baptized persons until they commit a mortal sin. It goes on increasing with every action done for God. Nothing can take it away from us except a deliberate or grave act of disobedience to His holy law. Pray for a continually increasing sense of the incomparable beauty of baptismal innocence.

## 29th Day.—The Precious Blood in the Sacrament of Penance.

1. The task of the Precious Blood in Baptism is a comparatively light one side by side with that which it performs in the sacrament of penance. In Baptism original sin is washed away; in penance, actual sin. The former cleaves to us through no fault of our own; the latter is the result of our own deliberate deed. It makes us the enemies of God in quite a different sense from that which is the result of original sin. It places us, or, rather, we place ourselves of our own free will, under the power of Satan; voluntarily we forfeit our inheritance, and proclaim ourselves rebels. The task of reconciliation is a far more difficult one, and is only possible with our own co-operation.

2. Yet the Precious Blood restores the sinner to his allegiance, and frees him from the power of Satan, when he comes really anxious to be delivered. As soon as it touches the soul of the sinner, it washes it clean and pure as if he had never sinned, and restores him to peace and friendship with God. Who has not witnessed its transforming power, and seen the sinner before hardened, depressed, almost in despair, now become full of peace and consolation and joy under its divine influence?

3. We cannot wonder at Our Lord's cry of agony in Gethsemani, or at His sweat of blood, when we think what it was that the Precious Blood had to efface from our souls. What an accumulated horror of pride and selfishness and impurity and covetousness! Such a cleansing could only be gained at the cost of a sacrifice infinite in value. O Jesus! make me to appreciate more Thy divine love.

### **30th Day.—The Precious Blood in Holy Communion.**

1. If in other sacraments the Precious Blood is morally applied to the souls of those who receive them, in holy Communion it is physically communicated to body as well as soul. We have the wonderful privilege of being brought into bodily contact with the Precious Blood, whether it be under the species of wine in the chalice, or of bread in the Sacred Host. How pure our bodies should be if they are thus to touch the Source of all purity, the Holy of holies, the God Whose infinite purity is such that the very angels are not pure in His sight! How can we venture thus to touch Christ Himself? To receive the Precious Blood into our sinful and impure bodies?

2. Yet Christ Our Lord invites us to do so. In His inexplicable love for us, He desires us, asks us, to receive His Precious Blood in holy Communion. Instead of saying, as he did to Mary, Touch Me not; He says, Drink, O My friends, and be inebriated, O My dearly beloved. Admire His divine condescension, and beware of presuming on His patience and His love.

3. How are we to account for Jesus' willingness, nay, anxiety to be thus received by sinful men? It is because in thus communicating Himself to us, He makes us more like to what He Himself is, and what He desires us to be. The Precious Blood imparts to our souls all heavenly gifts and graces if we receive it as we ought. O Jesus, grant that I may receive Thee frequently, fervently, with a complete oblation of my whole self!

### **31st Day.—The Precious Blood in Heaven.**

1. In heaven the Precious Blood of Jesus will not only share the glory of His sacred humanity, but it will be the source of its divine beauty, for the glory of Jesus will then consist in having bought us with a great price, and that price was none other than His Precious Blood. It will be a continual source of joy and thanksgiving to us, and will ever remind us of our ransom from sin and hell, and of the unspeakable blessings we shall then enjoy. Grant, O Lord, that I may share that joy!

2. The special glory of the Precious Blood appears to be ever present in the minds of the redeemed in heaven, and to form the subject of their songs of praise. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and glory and power." "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood." "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." If this is to be the continual song of heaven, we must try and anticipate it on earth by cultivating a devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus.

3. The Precious Blood will also receive the unceasing homage of the blessed in heaven on account of its having won for them all their graces. It purchased for them the glory that they now enjoy. In the overflowing of their hearts they will recognize it as the fount of all those delights that will inebriate their souls. Through it they drink of the waters of life, through it they gaze in ecstasy on the glory of Jesus, through it they are absorbed in the beatific vision. O my Lord! it is to Thy Precious Blood that I owe everything in this life, and shall owe my eternal happiness in the life to come. Oh, fill me with unspeakable gratitude to Thee now and forever!





**Requiescant in Pace.**  
**SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR NOVEMBER.**



## PREFACE.

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IN the following meditations an attempt is made not merely to put before the reader pious reflections respecting Purgatory, but to introduce some of the leading points of Catholic doctrine on the subject. There is nothing so practical as dogma; pious thoughts and affections must be founded on it, if they are to have any lasting influence. On many questions respecting Purgatory, vague and even false notions are very common among Catholics. It is the object of the following pages to instruct unto justice as well as to lead to the practice of good works.

R. F. C.



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## 1st Day.—The Saints in Heaven.

1. *I saw a great multitude which no man could number, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands.* (Apoc. vii. 9.)

*Requiescant in pace.* There is no need to offer this prayer for the saints in heaven, except by way of congratulation, of joy at the thought of their happiness. Their period of suffering is past; they rest in eternal peace, in the perfect possession of Him for whom they were created, and apart from whom man is ever restless and dissatisfied. To have peace with God—this is the joy of heaven, and this alone can give us joy on earth.

2. This countless multitude stand before the throne of God, and in sight of the Lamb. These are the two fountains of their joy. They are never weary of admiring the justice of God, His wisdom, power, majesty. They also drink in, as they behold the Sacred Humanity of the Lamb, an inexhaustible draught of love and gratitude. He is their King, their Saviour, their Lord, their Love. To gaze on His perfect beauty is in itself paradise. No wonder then that they rest in peace.

3. How can the saints endure the sight of the divine glory? Are they not sinners all? Yes, all—save God's holy Mother. Or rather they *were* sinners all, but now they have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. This is the secret of true peace; sin forgiven, and a conscience pure and clean. We need not fear our past sins if we have by heart-felt contrition washed them away in Jesus' Blood, but even here we may rest in peace.

Pray that you may rest in peace in the love of God.



## 2d Day.—The Saints waiting for Heaven.

1. *Requiescant in pace.* On All Souls' Day we offer this prayer for those who are not only saints, but saints on the very threshold of paradise, waiting to be admitted to the immediate presence of God. It is always a privilege to do a service to the friends of God, it is so above all when those who need our help will in a short time behold His face in heaven, and will gratefully remember to all eternity each little prayer offered on their behalf.

2. These saints waiting for heaven cry out to us to help them. They have a claim on us by reason of the intensity of their suffering. No words can tell all that they suffer, and their very love for God increases their pain. Every compassionate heart will desire to do something to relieve them, and to shorten the time of their banishment. Yet how little I do for them!

3. They are, moreover, unable to help themselves. We always feel a more tender sympathy for those who cannot move a finger to relieve their own sufferings. Their helplessness appeals to our generosity. If we saw one whom we knew to be a saint enduring some affliction in which he could do nothing in his own behalf, we should be eager to assist him. The holy souls are utterly helpless; their own prayers avail them nothing. To us they look for aid, to us for an abridgment of their time of punishment. Do I respond to their appeal as I ought?

Endeavor to increase in sympathy for the souls in purgatory.

### **3d Day.—The Holiness of the Souls in Purgatory.**

1. Every soul in Purgatory, before coming thither, appears before the judgment-seat of Christ, and there recognizes its state before God, and (as many theologians tell us) makes an act of perfect contrition and fervent love, by which all the guilt of sin still attaching to it is removed. It is, as far as its own intrinsic condition is concerned, ready to appear in the immediate presence of God, and to enjoy the Beatific Vision forever. O happy souls that die in a state of grace, and are united to God by bonds that no power in earth or hell can sever!

2. This act of perfect contrition also implies a detestation of all venial sin, and of anything that interferes with the pure love of God. But it does not remove the debt that still has to be paid. It is rather the very intensity of the act of contrition that will make the soul long to do penance, and cause it to rejoice in being buried in purgatory till the justice of God is satisfied. How differently I shall then view my sins! How I shall loathe and detest the folly that led me to prefer to the will of God what was hateful in itself, and more hateful still by reason of the divine prohibition.

3. These holy souls will, however, gain no merit by their act of contrition and love. They will indeed receive the assistance of actual grace in proportion to the degree of sanctifying grace in which they died, but their co-operation with it will not add to their glory in heaven, or shorten their purgatory. After death, no redemption; no power to shake off the temporal punishment of a single sin.

Pray that you may lose no opportunity of merit while on earth.

#### **4th Day.—The Difficulty of Purgatory.**

1. These souls waiting for heaven are one and all holy. No spot of sin, no attachment to sin, no imperfection dwells within them. They love God with all the force of their regenerate nature, and God loves them with the fondest affection. They are to be His friends and companions forever. The throne in heaven is ready for each of them, and nothing can deprive them of it. The saints and angels are longing for their company, yet they cannot enter heaven. How strange it seems! What holds them back in their spotless purity from the bosom of their God?

2. They moreover long after God with the most intense longing; they have no attachment to any sort of sin; they do not cling to any creature with a love which interferes with their love of God. Why is not the door of heaven opened to them? Why are they kept waiting so long? They have done all they can. They have united themselves to Him by a perfect act of sorrow and love. Yet God, in His hatred of their past sins, keeps them in a place of banishment. How God must hate sin!

3. All their sufferings will not add anything to their future glory. However patient they may be, they will gain nothing by their willing endurance. Why then does not God, the All-merciful God, take them at once to heaven? We can understand that those who hate God are necessarily separated from Him, but why those who love Him, if they gain nothing by it? How God must hate sin if He thus punishes it in the case of those who have nothing in them save the purity of perfect love!

Seek to realize more the utter hatefulness of sin.

## 5th Day.—The Reason of Purgatory.

1. The doctrine of purgatory is, like all the teaching of the Church, perfectly reasonable. There are many good men and women loving God above all things, who have often made good acts of contrition for their past sins, who are nevertheless still very imperfect. It would be strange if they who commit many daily faults, of which some are deliberate and are done with a full knowledge that they displease God, should at once take their place in the company of the saints. It would jar upon our ideas of what is required by the holiness and majesty of God.

2. Most men have never had a sorrow for sin corresponding to its true character. It has not been in any wise equivalent to the malice of sin, or the insult offered by it to Almighty God. They have paid but a very small portion of the debt due, and though Our Lord's merits are of infinite value, yet they have not availed themselves of them as they might. The remainder of this debt must be paid before the justice of God is satisfied.

3. Most men up to the end of their lives are still attached to some fault or imperfection displeasing to God. They know it is not a serious sin and therefore they think too lightly of it, and do not make the efforts they might to overcome it. When death comes, they see it in its true light, and are pierced with sorrow and dismay and hatred of themselves, and a desire to make satisfaction to God by suffering the penalty of their sin.

Ask yourself whether you have reason to fear on any of these accounts.

## 6th Day.—The Justice of Purgatory.

1. Every mortal sin has in it an intensity of evil that cannot be measured, inasmuch as it is a deliberate and wilful offence against a God of infinite holiness. Our Lord, by the satisfaction of infinite value He offered for sin, saved us from the eternal punishment which is incurred by each mortal sin. But the divine justice requires on our part that we should suffer in some way a penalty that at least reflects in its intensity something of the intensity of the evil of mortal sin. Either in this life or in purgatory man must expiate each single sin committed.

2. Venial sin has also in it an intensity of evil that we do not understand. It is a greater evil than all the physical evil, all the misery, all the pain in the whole world. We too often overlook venial sin in our acts of contrition, we forget its baseness, meanness, treachery. Our hands are not clean when we appear before God, and we do not trouble ourselves to cleanse them. Hence we have to be cleansed in the searching fires of purgatory that God's justice may be vindicated.

3. How few there are who, when they come to die, have learned to hate sin as those must who are to appear before God in heaven. They still cling to the things of earth, and prefer them in some way to that which they know God desires of them. "O Death!" says the Wise Man, "how terrible thou art to the man who has peace in his possessions." For such an one there is also a terrible purgatory, for this sort of peace is sure to involve many venial sins that have passed almost unnoticed.

Pray for a wholesome fear of the just judgments of God.

## 7th Day.—Purgatory under the Old Law.

1. *It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins* (2 Mach. xii. 45). These words of Holy Scripture, approving the custom of praying for the dead, that they may be *loosed* from their sins, implies that they are *bound* by sin in a prison-house, from which one day they will be released. The phrase would be meaningless were there no purgatory. Even apart from inspiration, the passage bears witness to the prevalent belief of the whole Jewish people. If they were so much impressed with the fear of the sufferings of purgatory, and ready to help those imprisoned there, how much more should I!

2. The sacred writer commends the piety of Judas Machabeus, who collected a large sum of money to have sacrifices offered for the sins of those who had died in battle. His charity was very pleasing to God. Amid the distresses and anxieties of the war in which he was engaged with the enemies of God, he did not forget the holy dead. What a firm belief he must have had in purgatory! What a vivid realization of the needs of those who suffer there! Yet I too often seem to forget the very existence of purgatory and of those who suffer there!

3. Judas recognized the duty of special prayers and sacrifices for our own countrymen and friends; for those whom we have known and with whom we have associated on earth. Surely if he had this zeal, I, a child of the Church, ought to do more than I do for my friends, acquaintances, and connections.

Pray for more devotion to those who have a special claim on you.

## 8th Day.—Purgatory under the New Law.

1. Though Our Lord brought fresh graces without number and privileges without end, which made the path to heaven easy to find compared with what it had been before, yet at the same time those additional graces involved additional responsibility for those on whom they were bestowed. Under the light of the Gospel, with the sight of Christ crucified before them, with all the privileges of the Church, their venial sins were far worse than those of the Jews and pagans. Do I ever remember all that Christ has done for me, and think how it increases my guilt?

2. The punishment of sins committed by Christians will be far heavier than that of those committed by non-Christians. He that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes. The fire shall try every man's work, and it will indeed be a searching, penetrating fire. Just in proportion to the light and grace given will be the punishment for refusing it. When I think of the clear light and strong grace I have enjoyed, what must I expect?

3. That which makes sin so grievous now is that it is not only an offence against God, but an act of unkindness and ingratitude to Jesus Christ. It basely returns Him evil for His love to us. God treated far more leniently those who lived in days of ignorance, when He had not revealed Himself in His Son. Now, He calls on us all to do penance in this life, else we shall have to do a terrible penance hereafter.

Pray for a conviction of the evil of sin as an insult to Him Who died on the Cross to save us from our sins.

### **9th Day.—The Punishment of Purgatory.**

1. Every punishment that God sends in this life upon sin has a double object, to satisfy His justice, and to bring about the reformation of the offenders. God always has in view the salutary effects of the punishment on him who suffers it, and with this object He gives a grace to enable him to use it aright. Through the divine mercy, the very punishment of our sins may thus promote our happiness here and our glory in heaven.

2. It is not so with the punishment of purgatory. It is purely a *paena vindicativa*, a penalty which has for its object the reparation, as far as may be, of the outrage offered to the majesty of God by sin. It is this which gives it its character of awful severity. The sinner has no opportunity of making good use of it to learn a lesson for the future. He has not the consolation of knowing he can turn it into a source of heavenly joy. It must simply be endured as long as God shall please, and at the end will have produced no fruit of additional glory in heaven for ourselves.

3. The punishment of purgatory, moreover, does not for the most part follow close on the offences of which it is the penalty. God waits, and this always means a heavier and more terrible penalty. In the days of the Flood He waited one hundred and twenty years. So God waits to see whether the sinner will expiate in this life the sins for which temporal punishment still remains. He gives him the graces necessary, and if these are neglected, God takes into His own hands the vindication of His majesty. What reason have I to fear God's terrible wrath for my sins!

**Ask for the privilege of atoning for your sins in this life.**



## 10th Day.—The Employments of Purgatory.

1. The one continual occupation of the holy souls in purgatory will be to *suffer*. There will be the dull monotony of constant suffering. No light from heaven to cheer them in their anguish, no pleasant sights to see, no sweet sounds to hear, nothing but the passive endurance of unceasing pain. How tediously will the hours and days pass away! Nothing makes the time seem so long as the gnawing of ceaseless pain, the absence of all that cheers and makes existence bright.

2. Will the holy souls in purgatory be able to pray? Yes, in so far as prayer is the expression of a longing desire for that which we have not. But they will not gain any merit from their prayers; there will be none of the consolations, nothing of the happiness of prayer. Their entreaties to be relieved will receive no answer from their God save that which is conveyed in Our Lord's words: "I tell thee, thou canst not go out thence till thou hast paid the very last farthing." How foolish shall I be if I neglect prayer here, and so have to pray for long years the fruitless prayer of purgatory!

3. Will the holy souls praise God? Yes; by the painful **process** of their suffering they will glorify the justice of God. But in this praise there will not be the element of present joy that always enters into praise in heaven and on earth. It will be the acknowledgment of God's justice. We have sinned, and done wickedly; therefore is this anguish come upon us. If I am wise, I shall seek to anticipate this joyless praise by thanking God not only for the happiness of my life, but for its sorrows and chastisements also.

Learn to employ your time better in this life.

## 11th Day.—The Meditations of the Souls in Purgatory.

1. The holy souls will mourn and lament over their blindness and folly in accepting the miserable satisfaction of the transitory pleasures of earth at the cost of the separation from God and the physical torment that is their due. "Fools that we were!" they will cry out; "all the pleasures of our past life are not worth mentioning in comparison with the pain of one hour, nay, of one moment in purgatory. They were but a shadow that passed by, the remembrance of them does but add to our suffering."

2. "Fools that we were!" they will again cry out, "in that we did not accept with resignation the sorrows and trials of earth. By our impatience, our murmuring, our discontent, we only made ourselves more miserable, and for this very misery added to our lot on earth by our own folly, we are suffering now far greater misery in these torturing flames, and by our separation from Him Who is the source of all happiness and all joy."

3. "Fools that we were! We might have turned all those sufferings into happiness, if we had used them as we ought. We might have lightened them, and made them comparatively easy to bear, if we had been resigned to the holy will of God; nay, we might have earned merit from each and all, and learned willingly and of our own accord that lesson of patience that here we learn, willingly indeed, but nevertheless painfully, and as a just penalty of our impatience."

Reflect what will be to you the chief cause of suffering when you come to purgatory. Pleasures wrongfully indulged? or self-love? or sufferings badly borne?

## 12th Day.—Some further Meditations of the Souls in Purgatory.

1. There are other thoughts still more painful which will be continually present to the holy souls. "If we had used our time on earth more prudently, we might have avoided our purgatory altogether. How often the whispers of God's grace suggested to us some pious work, some deed of charity to others, some little sacrifice of present comfort for the sake of helping those in need, some mortification of our senses, some visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the devotion of some portion of time to prayer or spiritual reading! If we had only listened and obeyed, we should be in heaven now instead of in the agony of the tormenting fire." Am I obedient to such daily inspirations?

2. "If we had taken all the means in our power to atone while on earth for sins already committed, we might have anticipated a part, or perhaps the whole, of our purgatory. But we were satisfied with confessing our sins, and so getting rid of the guilt, and then we thought that we had done all that was necessary, instead of making frequent acts of contrition, and performing penances and good works with the object of freeing ourselves from the punishment still due."

3. "How generous God would have been to us in remitting the penalty still remaining if we had shown an anxiety to do our part in freeing ourselves from the debt that still had to be paid. How liberal He would have been in rewarding each prayer, each aspiration, each kind word or thoughtful act! Fools that we were to prefer our own will, comfort, ease, to the holy will of God!"

See what you can do to expiate past sins.

### 13th Day.—The Sorrows in Purgatory.

1. What is it that will cause the chief sorrows of purgatory? Above all and before all, the holy souls will sorrow at the thought of their having ventured to offend that God whom they love with every power of their soul, and whose love eclipses all other love. "How could we have dared to offend a God so holy, a God so loving, a God of infinite power, glory, and majesty?" They will hate and loathe themselves at the thought, and would gladly endure their physical pain multiplied a thousandfold, if only they could be rid of the gnawing pain at the thought of their having sinned against God.

2. They will also sorrow at the thought of the happiness they have lost to all eternity. They will appreciate the measurable loss that they will suffer to all eternity for each venial sin, nay, for each deliberate neglect of grace. On earth they never appreciated as they do now how it would have been better to accept any temporal anguish rather than lose one single degree of glory in heaven, but now they are cut to the heart at thinking how they have thrown away, not one degree alone, but countless degrees of the happiness after which they long; all this too thrown away irreparably and forever!

3. This sorrow swallows up their present suffering, or, rather, they would willingly endure their present suffering for ten thousand years more if only they could regain the happiness they have forfeited. What is any temporal pain compared with an eternal loss? and a loss, too, which means loss of God and loss of heaven—and that forever.

Pray for greater sorrow now, and a sorrow that may avert the sorrow of purgatory.

## 14th Day.—The Fire of Purgatory.

1. Every work of God is perfect in its kind, and that which He does immediately by the exercise of His divine power has always a greater force than that which He does through the agency of others. God Himself kindles the fire of purgatory. "The breath of the Lord, like a flame of fire, doth kindle it." Hence the fierceness of the torment it inflicts. It tortures the soul in purgatory far more than the material fire of earth tortures the body. It reflects in some way the Infinite Majesty of God.

2. According to St. Augustine, the fire of purgatory is of the same kind as the fire of hell. Venerable Bede narrates how one who was conducted by an angel in a vision to purgatory thought that such a place could be none other than hell. In purgatory it is true there is none of the despair of hell. The holy souls have heaven in prospect, but nevertheless their physical sufferings are scarcely different in kind from the awful agony of the lake of fire. How should I dread purgatory!

3. The fire of purgatory will search us through and through. It will be a penetrating fire; it will find out each fault still clinging to our soul at the hour of death, each stain not yet washed out by our tears of contrition will be burnt away before we can escape from our prison-house. When I think of the state of my soul before God, of my past sins and present defects, what reason I have to tremble at the thought of that crucible where the dross will be burnt out of me! What a long process it will be!

Pray that you may be more earnest in cleansing yourself from sin now!

## 15th Day.—The Pain of Sense in Purgatory.

1. The pain of purgatory is the penalty of sin, and sin is a greater evil than all the other evils of the whole world. Even the least venial sin deliberately committed is a worse evil than all the physical misery men have endured from the Creation until now. Hence the corresponding punishment must involve greater suffering than any earthly anguish. Some have even maintained that the lightest suffering in purgatory is more intolerable than the worst suffering on earth, and this opinion has in its favor the authority of St. Thomas himself. What reason, then, I have to dread purgatory and seek to atone for sin now !

2. The physical pain that the soul suffers in this life is dulled in that it comes through the medium of the corruptible body, but in purgatory it directly and immediately affects the soul. Hence it comes with far greater intensity, inasmuch as the soul is the root and spring of all sensibility. It will be more closely in contact with the fire and at the same time the fire will be endowed with a power to torture it with misery far worse than the utmost pangs which can be inflicted when the body intervenes.

3. The pain that we suffer in this life has necessarily a limit by means of the weakness of the body. Men faint away under extreme torture. But in purgatory the soul, freed from the body, will have no such limit fixed to its agony ; its power of endurance will be in proportion to the suffering it has deserved. How can I avoid this awful agony that threatens me ?

Cultivate a love of mortification now, and a hatred of any unlawful indulgence of the body.

## **16th Day.—The Pain of Loss in Purgatory.**

1. The pain of loss arises from the separation of the holy souls from God. In losing God they lose everything that can satisfy the higher faculties of the soul. For one instant they have seen face to face the glory of God as reflected in the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, and from that moment they long after Him with all the force of their spiritual nature. The consciousness that there is a barrier that separates them from Him Whom alone they love and after Whom they crave unceasingly, is to them an agony far worse than that of the tormenting flames.

2. In this life men scarcely feel the absence of God because there are a thousand external things that distract them. But in purgatory there will be nothing to occupy the intellect and the will, nothing but the blackness of darkness and the hungry yearning of the heart, that will have nothing to feed upon, no one on whom to pour out the treasures of its love, nothing for the mind to dwell upon save its own misery, the unspeakable misery of being deprived of God. O my God, grant that I may never be separated from Thee!

3. Even here we know the agony that is caused by the unsatisfied craving of mere earthly love. Men who are separated from the object of their love seem able to find no happiness or consolation in aught else. The intensity of their misery sometimes drives them to madness, to suicide. Yet their agony is but a trifle compared with the agony of the holy souls deprived of God. How gladly they would suffer any physical torments for one ray of light from the throne of God!

Pray for an appreciation of what it is to love God.

## **17th Day.—The Degrees of Pain in Purgatory.**

1. The pain of sense and the pain of loss have each of them an almost indefinite number of degrees. The pain of sense varies in proportion to the indulgence of the senses on earth, and the knowledge possessed of the sinfulness of this indulgence. Those who have had merely the natural law to guide them will have a comparatively light punishment, while those who have been nurtured under the shadow of the Church and taught that they must crucify the flesh with its concupiscences will indeed have a terrible penalty to pay. All the advantages and graces that they have received will but add to their punishment in as far as they have wilfully thrown away those golden opportunities of self-conquest.

2. The pain of loss, too, will vary according to the degree of holiness which was within their reach. All will experience their greatest suffering from this loss of God, but with some the loss, however great in itself, will be felt far less sensibly. It is those who were called to a high sanctity, to whom God revealed Himself with a special intimacy of love on earth, who will appreciate most intensely the misery of separation from Him. What reason, then, I have to tremble!

3. Each of these two kinds of pain will gradually be assuaged as time goes on. They will be worst at first, and will diminish little by little as the debt to be paid becomes lighter. This mitigation will be hastened on by the prayers and good works offered for the holy souls on earth, by the supplications of the Church, and above all by the Sacrifice of the Mass. How much we may do for those who are suffering for their sins!

**Pray that you may earn a speedy relief.**



## 18th Day.—Our Kinsmen in Purgatory.

1. Most of us have some who are related to us by blood still suffering in the purgatorial fire, father or mother, brother or sister, some other kinsmen perhaps more closely connected with us. All these have a special claim upon us. They are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. To neglect them is very cruel, as it would be to neglect those of the same family, if they were suffering on earth in some way we could easily relieve. Might I not do more for my relations who are still in need of my help?

2. We all shrink from unnatural cruelty: a son who neglects his mother in her need; a parent who leaves his child in misery. There is a sort of unnatural cruelty in neglecting those to whom it may be we owe much, and whom God has in some way entrusted to us. They are now dependent on us, stretching out their hands for spiritual alms, for Masses, prayers, indulgences. I might so easily do more—why do I not do it?

3. We read in the parable of Dives how he dreaded the presence of his brethren in the place when he was in torments. This will also be the case in purgatory. How bitter it will be to us to know that there are some closely united to us by blood, who are also there through our fault or neglect! If we had shown charity to them in this life, they might long ago have been in heaven, praying for our deliverance. Instead of that our purgatory will be prolonged for our unkindness to them, and will be intensified by self-reproach. God will treat us as we have treated them.

Think of your suffering relations and beware of neglecting them.

## 19th Day.—Our Friends and Acquaintances.

1. Of all those with whom we have been connected by some tie of friendship or affection, of companionship, or common occupation, or business, how many there must be who are now in purgatory! Most of them have some sort of claim on us. Some have been entrusted to our care; others have been influenced by our example; others have claims on our gratitude; others have in some way helped us on our way to heaven. To all these we should seek to hold out a hand in the midst of their time of suffering.

2. There is one class in purgatory whom we are to help. In the course of our lives we have done much harm and little good. The harm we have done has had an evil influence on others; perhaps we have led them into sin by our bad example. We might have done so much by the holiness of our lives to make them love God, and we have done so little! Will there not be many whose time in purgatory will be much longer than it would have been if I had only lived up to a higher standard?

3. There are also many in purgatory who have commended themselves to our prayers or been commended to us after their death; we have promised to pray for them, yet we have done little or nothing for them. How unkind they must think us to have forgotten them! In our thoughtlessness we have lost an opportunity of charity that would have won for us their grateful thanks to all eternity.

Examine yourself as to whether you owe help to any in purgatory by reason of either (1) your bad example, (2) your neglect of duty to them when alive, (3) your neglect of your promise to help them after death.

## 20th Day.—The Happiness of Purgatory.

1. The happiness of purgatory is a happiness of prospect, not of actual enjoyment. It is *in spe* and not *in re*, hoped for, not already possessed. But the hope is something more than hope, it is a certain expectation which the holy souls know cannot be disappointed. This is their support and strength, their joy and consolation, amid their unspeakable anguish. They can look forward to the long years of eternal bliss when they will repose in the bosom of God. O happy prospect, to us always uncertain, so certain to those holy souls!

2. Happiness consists in union with God. If the soul is united to God by supernatural charity, beneath every kind of sorrow and misery there is an underlying joy. Now the holy souls are perfect in their charity. They have made an act of fervent charity at their judgment, and the habit of charity is in them as strong as ever. Hence in spite of all their sufferings they are intensely happy, and cry out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

3. Happiness is not incompatible with intense suffering. A man may be light-hearted while he is shrieking with physical pain; he may be light-hearted even when separated from one whom he loves better than all the world beside. He is happy by reason of his internal dispositions, and in spite of the bitterness of the separation or the fierceness of the physical pain. So it is with most holy souls. Their dispositions are perfect, their will is God's. They are full of hope and love; how can they fail to be happy?

Pray for an unceasing union with God by charity.

## **21st Day.—The Alleviations of Purgatory.**

1. Our Lord does not forget the souls that He loves. As at the time of His Death He visited limbo, so He from time to time manifests Himself to the holy souls in purgatory, to comfort and cheer them. What a day of joy must it be for the holy souls when their Lord and King vouchsafes, if it be but for a moment, to illumine the dark prison-house with the light of His divine presence! How they must sigh after Him when He departs! for what joy is there like the joy that comes of the presence of Jesus?

2. Our Lady, too, comes also with the same merciful design, especially on a Saturday, on her great feasts, and above all, on the Feast of the Assumption, when she releases not a few holy souls every year, and carries them with her to heaven. What a delight it must be to them to be thus comforted by the holy Mother of God! How they must rejoice in having gained this privilege by their devotion to her while they were yet alive!

3. The angels, too, are often sent by God to assuage the pains of the suffering souls. Our Lord does not forget the angel who consoled Him during His Sacred Agony, when He took upon Himself the intolerable weight of the sins of the whole world, and He knows what it is to be suffering for sin that has no hold on the soul, but nevertheless drags it down, like some heavy weight attached to it by the divine justice. Hence there are angels appointed to comfort the holy souls, to refresh them amid the devouring flames.

Ask your guardian angel never to let you fall into sin, that so you may not need his help after life is done.

## 22d Day.—How to avoid Purgatory.

1. There are few who might not avoid purgatory if they were only willing to adopt the requisite means. These means are, a spirit of charity to others, and of self-denying charity. Charity shall hide a multitude of sins, and it will hide them in such a way that they shall be entirely blotted out, leaving behind them no debt of punishment still due. Our Lord has promised that what measure we mete out to others, the same shall be measured to us again. If we mete out to others a perfect charity, God will mete out to us a complete remission of our sins in the particular judgment without a trace of penalties to be suffered in the flames of purgatory.

2. A spirit of great generosity to the poor for Christ's sake. God is always generous to those who deal generously with others, and almsgiving carries with it wonderful rewards. It seems as if there was an allusion to purgatory in the words of Holy Scripture that alms deliver from sin, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness; and in the precept, Give alms of thy goods, and never turn away thy face from any poor man, so shall not the face of the Lord be turned away from thee. Am I really generous to the poor?

3. A spirit of great compassion to the suffering souls who are now in purgatory. If we desire to escape purgatory, we must help to pay the debt of others. We must aid many on the road to heaven, if we desire to travel the same road without being detained on the way. Here, too, God will deal with us as we have dealt with others. What do I do for the holy souls?

Pray God to teach you how to avoid purgatory.

## 23d Day.—Other Means of avoiding Purgatory.

1. A great devotion to the Sacred Passion of Christ is one of the surest methods of escaping the penalty due to our sins. He is always touched by any compassion shown Him in His sacred sufferings. He is said to have revealed to some saint that He would remit the temporal punishment due after death to any one who for fifteen years should say every day seven *Paters*, seven *Aves*, and one *Gloria* in honor of His Sacred Passion. It seems very likely that such perseverance in honoring Him in what He suffered for us would exempt from purgatory altogether. What do I do in this respect?

2. We may also hope to avoid purgatory if we pray God to give us our purgatory in this life. It requires some courage to do so, as, if God hears our prayer, we must expect to suffer greatly before we die, and perhaps to spend our lives in intense pain. How small will be the price paid in comparison with the advantage gained! All the sufferings of this life are small compared with the sufferings after death; and moreover here we can merit, we can go on increasing our eternal reward, but not in purgatory.

3. Purity of intention in all our actions is another of the most efficacious means of attaining the same end. Any one who does all his actions purely for God's sake will have nothing for the searching fire to lay hold of. It is self that has to be burnt out of us; self-will, self-love, self-indulgence. He who is rid of these may hope to go straight to heaven.

Pray that by one or other of these means you may avoid separation from God after your death.

## 24th Day.—How to shorten our Purgatory.

1. Most of us cannot hope to escape altogether from the cleansing fires, but we all desire to render our sojourn there as short as possible. There are many means of doing this. All the means already mentioned for escaping altogether will help to abridge our time of waiting ; especially compassion for the holy souls. They will not when they attain to the vision of God forget those who have done anything to help them. Yet how little we do ! And how bitterly we shall one day regret that we have not done more !

2. Another certain way of shortening our purgatory is devotion to the holy Mother of God. She, the Mother of mercy and compassion, has a special compassion for the suffering souls, and she, the most grateful of all the beings that God has ever created, will be speedy to relieve and to deliver those who were devout to her upon earth. Each prayer we say, each aspiration we make, each little invocation we repeat in her honor, will gain for us help when help will be sorely needed. Cannot you do something more in honor of Mary ?

3. We can also pay part of the debt due to God by means of indulgenced prayers.\* To certain prayers and good works the Church attaches the remission of a certain amount of suffering ; and she is most generous in the amount of debt that she gives us an opportunity of paying off before we die. How we shall rejoice over each such prayer when we come to experience the deliverance it has gained for us !

Ask of God that, if you have to pass through purgatory, at least your time there may be short.

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\* Cf. page 35.

## 25th Day.—The Allotment of Suffrages in Purgatory.

1. Every thing done to help any of the holy souls brings some sort of relief to the soul for whom it is offered. But the amount of relief we do not know; it depends on the will of God and the merits of the individual. A Mass offered for one person may deliver him altogether; for another it may have the effect merely of a drop of water to cool his tongue in the burning flames, or of a breath of cool air amid the furnace of fire. On our life *now* will depend our speedy relief and deliverance from purgatory still more than on the prayers offered for us then.

2. The very prayers and Masses that will avail us will be in great measure the result of what we do now to please God. If we help others now, we shall then have many to help us; if we give alms liberally, God will take care that we receive spiritual alms. A rich man who has been niggardly during life, but leaves a large sum of money for Masses to be said for him, will indeed derive some benefit from them, but it may be that God will transfer the great proportion of the satisfaction to some poor man who has been generous and charitable to others during life. The rich man may wait for long years, and the poor man, who had no money to leave, may be delivered at once. Learn then to be generous *now*.

3. The satisfactory value of every Mass, though it is in itself infinite, is not infinite as applied to the individual. It is limited by the will of God and the dispositions of man. God looks upon the merits of His Son and accepts them for that soul in proportion to its conformity to the likeness of Christ before its death. We must seek to be humble and meek of heart as Christ was, if His merits are to avail us then.

Pray for more grace and love now.



## 26th Day.--The Retributions of Purgatory.

1. God's way is to punish in kind. This law holds in purgatory as in most other penalties that God inflicts. Those who have pampered their bodies will suffer an exceeding great physical torment. Each sinful indulgence of the body will add to the fierceness of the scorching flames. The intemperate and glutton will suffer a parching thirst and gnawing hunger; the luxurious will be plunged into a cauldron as it were of boiling metal, and endure an agony, one moment of which will more than out-balance all the delights of earth. Have I reason to fear in this respect?

2. Those who have chosen to follow their own will instead of the will of God, who have been proud and ambitious, and rebellious against God, will have far worse things to suffer. The God whom they have forgotten will in His turn forget them; and in the agony of their remorse they will lament the folly and the sin that have left them in the blackness of darkness. If without self-will there be no hell, it is also true that without self-will there would be no purgatory.

3. Those who have neglected to help the holy souls during life will be neglected in their turn. Somehow others will forget to pray for them, or if Masses and prayers are offered for them, God will transfer the main benefit of these to others. Every one who goes to purgatory will lament his want of generosity to others while he had a chance of helping them. Slow indeed will be the release of those who did little or nothing for the release of others.

Try to anticipate those punishments in kind by (1) mortification, (2) submission, (3) charity to others.

## 27th Day.—The Duration of Purgatory.

1. Purgatory will continue until the day of judgment. There will be some there still, who have been expiating their sins in dreadful torments for long years, perhaps for centuries. We read, in the revelations of the saints, of men being condemned to suffer the torment of fire as long as the world shall last. The Church, in sanctioning Masses in perpetuity, favors this opinion. At all events, fifty, or one hundred, or one thousand years will be the extent of the time that some will have to endure the penalty of sins committed during their life. Shall not I have to expect a long purgatory?

2. No time on earth will appear a hundredth part as long as the long tedious hours in purgatory. Those who have been there but for a day have complained that they had been left there for a hundred years and more; a few moments seem like months. We little know what we are preparing for ourselves when we commit venial sins, or what is in store for us by reason of our imperfect atonement for past sins.

3. Each soul that appears before God at the particular judgment with sin imperfectly atoned for will be condemned to a certain period of purgatory, a fixed number of days, or weeks, or months, or years, as the case may be. But the time may be shortened by the prayers and suffrages of those on earth and in heaven. God will provide relief for those who have relieved others, but those who have neglected the suffering souls will in their turn be left to work out their time of suffering unaided.

Be wise and provide for yourself friends now, that they may receive you into eternal habitations.

## 28th Day.—Indulgences in Purgatory.

1. We can gain for ourselves, or for the holy souls, indulgences varying from thirty days to thousands of years. Does this mean that our time in purgatory will be abridged by this period? No, but that we shall be spared that amount of suffering which would have been involved in a corresponding period of the old canonical penances of the Church. What that amount of suffering is we do not know. All we know is that each indulgence brings with it some sort of relief. It may be that an indulgence of a thousand years may only shorten our purgatory by a few moments. We may gain indulgences amounting to millions of years, yet still may have a time of purgatory remaining.

2. What is meant by a Plenary Indulgence? It is one which brings with it a complete remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, if the person gaining it has perfect dispositions, and a hatred of sin corresponding to its hatefulness. But if the dispositions are imperfect, then it has only a partial effect. Hence we may gain many plenary indulgences and yet have a large debt still to pay.

3. Are indulgences always assigned to those for whom they are offered? Yes, they always bring them some benefit. Yet we are said to offer them by way of *suffrage*. Many theologians explain this as meaning that we ask God, *if it be His good pleasure*, to bestow them on this or that person; if not, on those more worthy. Our friends may gain many plenary indulgences for us after our death without our being released. We must deserve them now if we are to enjoy their full effect.

**Make a resolution to do more to aid the holy souls.**

## 29th Day.—How to help the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

1. We should make it our practice to offer each day some special prayer or work for the holy souls. We may not do much, but by constancy in laboring on their behalf we shall gradually accumulate a treasure for their benefit. We should never miss saying a *De Profundis* for them every night, and we should offer up holy Communion for them from time to time. In our morning oblation we should pray that God may accept our labors, our sufferings, our penances for them.

2. We should also be careful to say as many indulgenced prayers as we can for them. Every prayer offered for them benefits them; every indulgenced prayer has a double efficacy. It has a satisfactory value in itself, and has a further power to obtain relief for them by reason of the indulgence attached to it. In this way how much we may do for the holy souls!\*

3. There are some whom God inspires to make what is called the *Heroic Act*, by which they offer up all the satisfactions of all their works, of the prayers and Masses said for them, and the indulgences gained for them after their own death, to be bestowed on the holy souls according to Our Lady's pleasure. This supreme act of self-sacrifice is indeed heroic, for it includes a willingness to remain in purgatory as long as God shall please for the sake of helping others out. What a great reward this will obtain in heaven! What gratitude it will earn from the holy souls!

Think how many there are that need your help.

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\* A few short indulgenced prayers are added at the end of this book.

### 30th Day.—The Termination of Purgatory.

1. However long the sojourn in purgatory, at last the day will come, the long-expected day, when the soul, released from its prison, will wing its way into the presence of God. Oh, what a happy day that will be! No more suffering, no more separation from God, no more of the darkness and desolation which are the penalties of sin. The very remembrance of the agony that is past will make the present joy all the more joyful. How eagerly the soul will rush into the embraces of its God, when it knows that the stain is washed away, the debt paid, and that it can now appear without fault before Him, to enjoy forever the Beatific Vision?

2. That day will often come unexpectedly. Though the soul had been long waiting, it had not hoped for so speedy a release. It had looked for years of suffering still to come, and suddenly the chains fell from off it, the darkness turned to a glorious light, and an unspeakable joy filled its whole being, and in an instant it was in heaven.

3. What had shortened the period of its purgatory? God's love of joyful surprises: just when we least expect it He turns sorrow and misery into joy and happiness; the prayers offered for it upon earth, and the good works which it had done, and which now at length bore fruit to the glory of God and to its own consolation and joy. Our acts of charity, our alms, all that we do for God will hasten our release, and will earn for us intercessors who will come to welcome us when we enter on our eternal repose.

O my God, may I have many such to shorten my purgatory!

### Short Indulgenced Prayers for the Holy Souls.

1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; the earth is full of Thy glory.  
Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son,  
Glory be to the Holy Ghost. (100 days.)
2. My Jesus, mercy! Mary, help! (200 days.)
3. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul;  
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony;  
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I die in peace with you. (300 days.)
4. Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love. (300 days.)
5. Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation. (300 days.)
6. O Sacrament most holy! O Sacrament divine,  
All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine. (100 days.)
7. O sweetest Heart of Jesus, I implore  
That I may ever love Thee more and more.  
(300 days.)
8. Jesus, meek and humble of heart,  
Make my heart like unto Thine. (300 days.)
9. Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Precious  
Blood of Jesus in satisfaction for my sins  
and for the wants of holy church. (100 days.)
10. Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
To whom His love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, to rule and guide.  
Amen. (100 days.)
11. St. Joseph, friend of the Sacred Heart, pray for us. (100 days.)

Most of the above, if recited daily, enable the reciter to gain a plenary indulgence once a month by confession and Communion.













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